

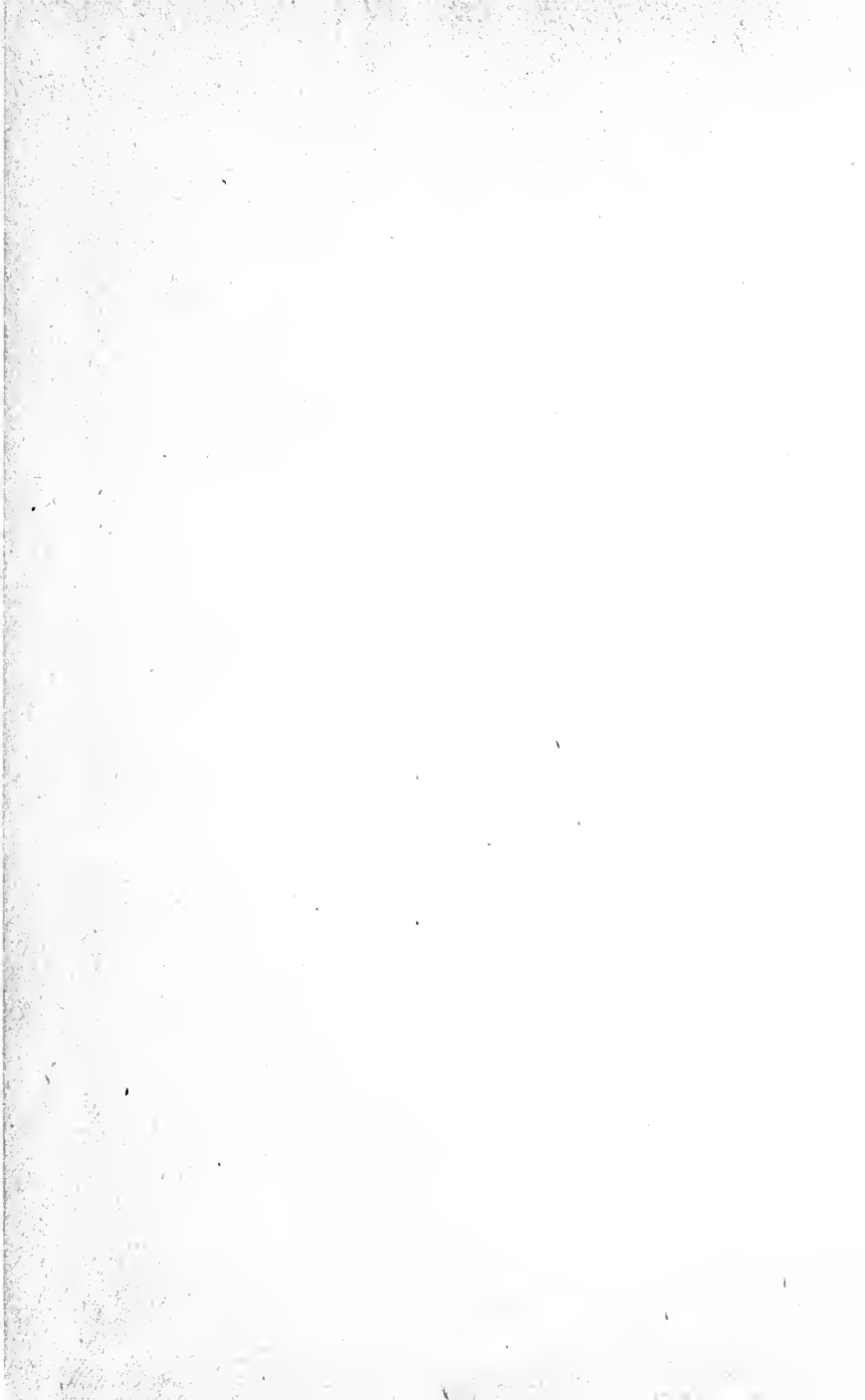
THYRA
VARRICK

AMELIA · E · BARR



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THYRA VARRICK





THE ASHES * * * STILL LYING THERE.

THYRA VARRICK

A Love Story

BY

AMELIA E. BARR

*Author of "Trinity Bells," "The
Bow of Orange Ribbon,"
etc.*

ILLUSTRATED BY

LEE WOODWARD ZEIGLER



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I Inscribe This Book

To

My Dear Children

Mr. and Mrs. Edward A. Munro

THE AUTHOR

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THYRA VARRICK

CHAPTER I

"The Land of Hills and Glens and Heroes"

THE house of MacArgall stood on the slope of a mountain overlooking the loneliest valley in the north of Scotland. A labyrinth of gigantic hills surrounded it, shutting out the world more and more at every step, until it seemed an impossibility either to go further or to go back. But the barrier once passed, the vista opened out into a deep valley and wild tracts of moorland; and then the great gray house standing on the side of Ben Argall was startlingly distinct. It was built of the rocks lying abundantly around; great blocks of granite mortared together so thoroughly that the storms of five centuries had left no trace on its solid masonry. Bare and firm as a rock, it stood; a look of defiance on its front, and an air of something sorrowful and implacable in its aspect.

The mountain rose steeply from the back of the house; first a stately belt of firs, terminating in juniper, and great boulders edged with heather; and then the bare crags where the ravens built; and still higher

up, the tremendous peaks, where the eagles reared their young. Not far away from the house were many small stone huts, built into the clefts of the mountain, and attracting attention only by the aperture of the door, or by the smoke ascending from the opening in their roofs. These were the homes of the clansmen, and from them, at the sound of MacArgall's horn, they poured four hundred strong into the great court which sloped from the front of the house down to the strath or valley of Argall.

At the time this story opens, the head of Clan MacArgall was Chief Murdo Maximus MacArgall, the eighth of his name ; a man of great age, but full of the fire of youth ; a ruddy, tall, wrinkled giant, with something Scythian and restless, drawing him to endless antagonism with the world around him—a fighter because he loved to fight, and full of that self-appreciation which could sincerely say, “I do not know a better man than myself.”

He was walking about the large central hall of his house one afternoon in the spring of 1745. The land was lonelier than ruin, but even so, the long strath wore a halo of dandelions, and on the young grass a thousand cattle were straying and feeding. So he rested at the open window watching them, wondering the while how soon his drovers could start southward with their lots of beasts. The sunshine fell on his mighty form, on his white hair and strong face, on the Jacobite tartan he wore ; and glinting on his dirk

showed on its handle the large silver “S,” for Stuart, in the open-work of its hilt. All his garments were large and free, and his checkered hose bound not his stride, for they did not reach his knee by a span.

The sight of the spring and the cattle was pleasant to him, and his thoughts were vivid and hopeful, but his molesting temper could not let him be at rest. In a few minutes he turned impatiently and cast his eyes upon a young man and a young woman who were sitting at the upper end of the hall. The woman was threading a string of beads made of transparent golden-brown crystals of the Cairngorm mountains; the young man was reading a book. Their occupations were alike trivial and idle in the Chief’s estimation, and he spoke with an imperious sharpness as he turned:

“Revan, this is no reading time. Are you a clerk or a priest? You have five fingers on each hand, were they made to handle bits of paper?” and he lifted the claymore that lay upon the table, and let it fall again with an angry clang.

“Father of my father,” answered the young man respectfully, “do not fret yourself. When it is the hour of the sword, my five fingers will quiver for the sword; then the book will fall from them. I am putting the time past with the tale of Conan.”

“Humf-f-f ! Then learn a lesson from Conan, and let your kindness to your enemies be like the kindness of Conan to the demons—cuff for cuff, and claw for claw.”

"I am sunwise [ready] for everything."

"You are not sunwise. 'Twere better you were on the hills counting the herds, than sitting here reading of the Conan. I was a prince among the beasts at your age. Lachlan, and Clythe, and Tavis might teach you something, if you would only listen to them."

"Do you wish Revan to be a drover, grandfather?" asked the girl. "Let him alone. He is doing well;" and she put her elbows on the arm of her chair and swung the string of beads to and fro in the sunshine. As she did so she looked from them to the Chief, and he caught her glance and smile and grew uncertain and uneasy, and turning to the open door again, took out his snuff-box and tapped on its golden lid something he could not bring his tongue to utter. Then the girl let her beads fall to her lap, and with a glance of sympathetic intelligence said softly: "Revan!" and Revan answered only: "Sara!" The word was full of tenderness, and he put aside his book and sat smiling and looking at his sister.

She was conscious of his admiration and pleased to look lovely in his eyes. She began to thread her beads again, and he watched her movements with delight; for though some might have denied her beauty, none could ignore her charm. She was small, with an uncommonly slender waist and upright carriage of the head, and her abundant hair was of that shimmering brown which has the effect of a halo, and her com-

plexion was delicate and blooming as a rose. She had the beauty of opening flowers, their softness and sweetness, but withal a gravity and clear austerity of mind that was akin to physical light. For Sara Mac-Argall had a spiritual nature of extreme sensibility, evidenced by eyes of that weird blue that can see visions. At times her whole face had this ultra-terrestrial charm, but usually the mystical aspiration of her nature was dominated by the passionate directness of a woman of the world, who regarded daily life and its duties as matters of imperative importance.

Her brother Revan resembled her in some respects; in others he differed widely. He had a towering form crowned with the same beautiful shining hair; great mental and physical vigor, blunt speech, and an icy cold expression, with every now and then a look of fire. His dress was simple, if compared with the splendor of the grandfather's; and was remarkable in that he wore the tartan of his clan, rather than the Jacobite one assumed by his Chief. But he was not insensible to fine clothing, for as he looked at Sara, he recognized a richness in her attire which had also the added charm of novelty.

“This is a beautiful gown, Sara,” he said, drawing his chair close to her, and touching gently the soft, rich silk. “Who could have thought that pale green would have become you so completely? It is like the tender green sheath of a rose.”

“Aunt Athol brought me it; many other pretty

gowns also—a box full of lovely things. But I did not open the lid until this morning, because aunt was too weary to help me; and I could not deprive her of the pleasure of seeing my gratitude.”

“That is like you. I wonder what brought our aunt over the mountains at this time ! It was a great journey to take.”

“I have not been motive hunting. Say that she wanted to see our grandfather. He is her brother, and the last of her household—that is on the sword-side; there are women, but there is no man left of her father’s sons, save her brother Murdo.”

“I know, but grandfather goes once every year to see her.”

“I ask not why she came. She is ever welcome for herself, and she always brings with her a sough of the great, good world, beyond these mountains.”

“Then you think the great world is a good world?”

“Yes. I shall never forget the four years I spent with Aunt Athol in Edinburgh. They were a romance, a tale better and stranger than any the clansmen tell of the olden time.”

As she spoke she was listening, and she added, with a smile, “I hear Aunt Athol coming; rise, Revan!”

Then the young man went to a door and opened it and, bowing and offering his hand, led Lady Atholia Gordon into the room. She was the youngest and only living sister of the Chief; a tall, stately woman, about sixty years old, with a fresh, handsome face

full of good humor and shrewd common-sense. A coif of white lace covered her hair, her gown was of violet silk, and she carried a long ivory cane, though she had not the least real necessity for it.

“Children,” she said cheerfully, “a good day to you! Brother, is it well with you?”

“When you are here, it is always well, Athol.” Then he took her to the open door, and pointed out the drovers urging the cattle closer, and the quick-springing grass, which would make the southward journey for them near at hand. And as he said this, he looked into his sister’s face with an intelligence she understood, for she asked softly:

“Coming from the north and west, will the roads now be passable?”

“Men who want to pass over them can find a way; men not sure of their hearts may have stumbling feet.”

“You are still on the same side, Murdo?”

“There is only one side to me.”

“Right or unright?”

“Right or unright, I am on the same side forever.”

“You are a good man.”

“There are worse than me—at times.” Then he left her, and went striding down the strath, and she watched him a few moments, while a shadow of sadness passed over her face. The brooding power of the great hills, the murmur of running waters, the

silence, and pastoral melancholy filled her soul with prayer.

“Bring my chair into the open, Revan,” she said; “the wind streams out of the mountains like living water. And oh, children, the mountains themselves! They are like a great stairway going up to the skies. You lose sight of the ordinaries of life as you look at them. I wonder if they did reach as far as heaven, how many of us would try to win over the heights and depths of such a fearsome road !”

“I would try it joyfully, even if I perished in the effort,” said Sara.

“That would be just impossible, my little lambie. No perishing on that road ; for the good Shepherd would be everywhere ; both down in the depths and up on the heights. He is the ‘Way.’”

There was no answer to this remark. Sara looked far off, and far upward to the mystical stairway of mountains; and Revan sat with his arms on his knees and his head dropped thoughtfully forward, putting his thumbs and forefingers together. The sensitive pause was broken by Lady Gordon, who asked in a tone of solicitude:

“When shall we have more news? I can see the anxiety of the Chief; he is very near the end of patience.”

“Hector MacDonald should have been here five weeks ago. His delay means evil. Something has gone wrong, or this house and strath had now been full

of fighting men,” said Revan. “The meeting at the sign of ‘The Blue Bell’ was trysted for the twenty-fourth of last month. The tryst is broken; we can only wait for the reason.”

As he spoke there came down the strath a long, clear whistle, which they heard the Chief instantly answer.

“Hector has come at last,” said Sara joyously. She stood up and waved her scarf, and Lady Gordon also rose; but Revan hurried down the steep path to meet whatever news was coming.

It was not good news. That was plain enough to the two women before they heard a murmur of it. The Chief’s passionate voice and carriage, and Revan’s air of reserve or dejection, told some story of defeat and disappointment. But as the men came closer it was evident that the messenger was not himself much troubled. He said afterward, he had had his fit of despair, and that invincible hope had only grown stronger in it. Certainly at this hour joy was the master emotion; he gazed at Sara with a lover’s adoration, and was not then conscious of anything in life to make him miserable.

Travel-stained and weary with his long tramp through the mountain passes, he was nevertheless singularly attractive. He wore the splendid scarlet and black tartan of the MacDonalds, and on his black hair the picturesque Glengarry with the noble ensign of an eagle’s feather in it. A soldier every inch of him,

with all his good qualities in evidence: the handsome face, the cheerful temperament, the aristocratic manner of one born to command, the brightness of fiery youth, the black mustache soft as silk, shading lips full and tender. His faults were less obvious, for they were of that negative order held in abeyance, until circumstances develop them. He was never as great as he led people to imagine he would be. He was self-indulgent, and not able to practice any self-denial. Faithful unto death where his clan's traditions, or his political opinions were concerned; he was not faithful to his feelings; and after all has been said, it is feeling which lies at the foundation of every man and woman, and which makes them individual. Male and female friends alike called him fickle, and very likely with good reason.

But he came into the melancholy old hall like a shaft of sunshine. He brought movement and speech with him. Life that had seemed half dead was suddenly alert, noisy, busy. A score of men were running hither and thither, preparing his room, cleaning his clothing, hastening the meal, setting the table, bringing in wood for the fire. Somewhere near, the pipes began to play; and though the clan quickly understood that young Hector had not brought good news, the music was the defiant march of MacDonald, "Gainsay Who Dare."

As the Chief took his place at the table, Dugald, the piper of MacArgall, proudly entered with the fa-

mous black chanter of his clan; a pipe whose strains were said to inspire all who heard them, with more than mortal courage. Round the table he marched three times, filling the room with wild, passionate music. Then Chief Murdo put into his hand a great silver beaker full of Farintosh, and raising his own glass, he stood up and cried:

“God save King James! Gainsay who dare!”

The enchanted pipes reiterated in frenzied crescendos the dauntless challenge, until the room was in a delirious excitement. The Chief was snapping his fingers, as Highlanders do when under great emotion. Lady Gordon was weeping. Sara had risen to her feet, and every strand of her lovely hair seemed instinct with an individual life; it waved, it glowed, it appeared to have luminous emanations, to make a veritable glory round the fair oval face, that had grown white as a lily with feeling. On the contrary, Revan had utterly lost his cold appearance; his cheeks were like a flame, his eyes like living furnaces, and his radiant hair had the same characteristics as his sister's. Hector, quivering and noisy in his enthusiasm, urged on the piper with the untranslatable vehemence of the Highland battle cry—“*Sa! Sa! Sa! Sa! Sa! Sa!*”

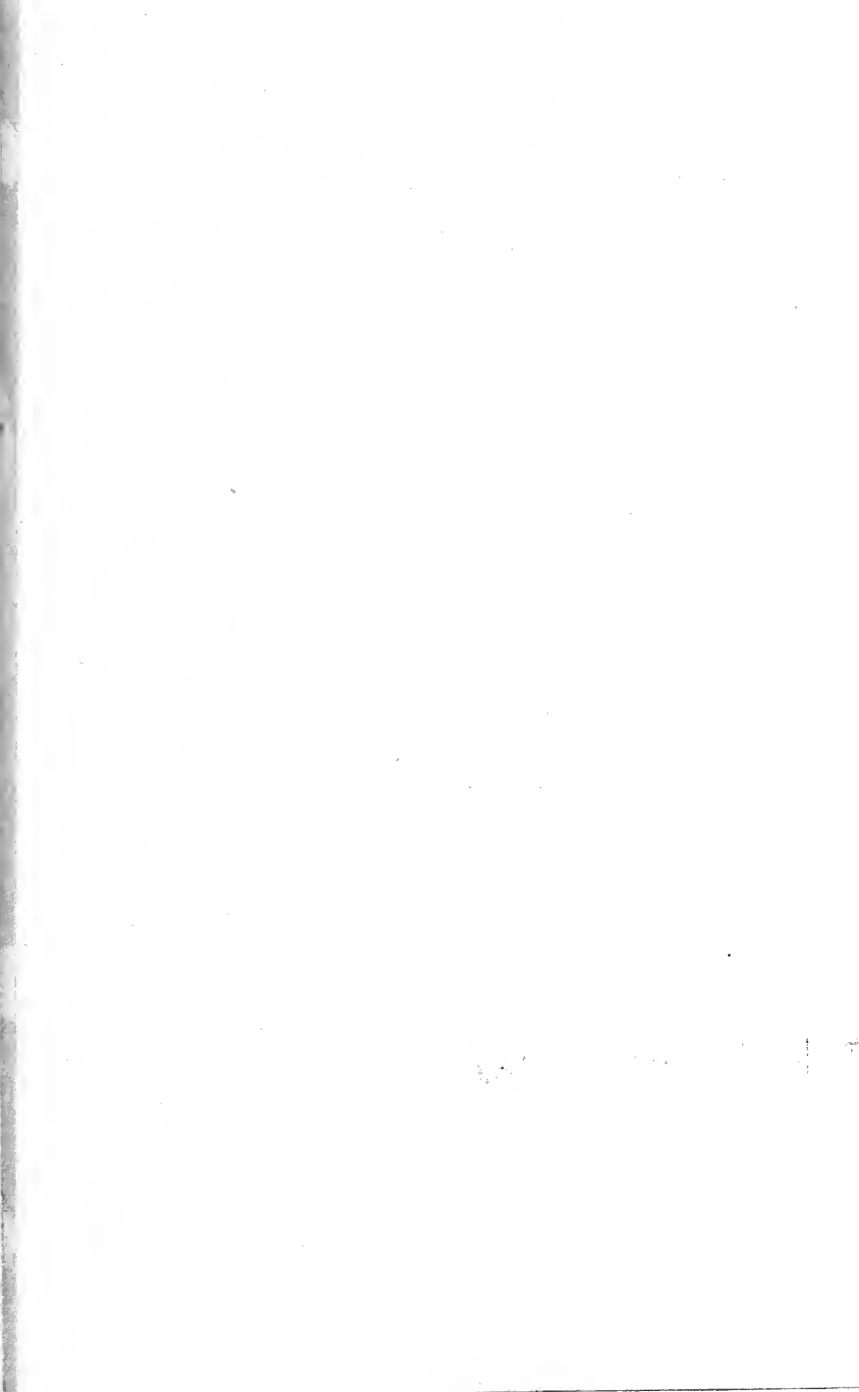
A few moments of such vivid life is all the spirit will endure and be restrained in its clay tabernacle! and it was well for the aged Chief that the tumult of the gathering clan in the court brought a diversion of feeling. They made no call on him, but he knew they

would wait until he appeared. Unbonneted he went to the open door, and stretched his hands out over them. A soft murmur, a perfect silence, followed the action, and gathering his life forces together he said :

“Children of Clan Argall. There is news, and some will be saying that it is not very good news. I tell you that it is very good news. Yes, indeed! the best news that has come yet. Listen to me. The French King, as you well know, swore to James the Seventh, as he lay dying, to stand by his son, and help him to his rights. Very well; a promise made to the dying must be kept, or great ill from the dead to the living, and King Louis was not caring to have the ill-will of the dead—who would? So to make good his word, he sent with our Prince Charles the great Mareschal Saxe, and fifteen thousand French troops. They were to land in Scotland, and we have been waiting for them, more than two months. They will never come. Things went black ill with them from the first. The devil was in the winds and waves, and ‘between the devil and the deep sea,’ and the English navy, they went to wreck and carrion. So far, it seems to be bad news; now comes the good of it. One is here—young Hector MacDonald—who was with Prince Charles, and who escaped with him to Paris. And he brings word that Prince Charles will never again look for help from the stranger. He will get more gold and arms, and will *come here to his own* and trust to our love and valor, and to no others. Then



"CHILDREN OF CLAN ARGALL. THERE IS NEWS."



he will come to the beginning of fortune, for the Highland host will bear him on their claymores to Perth; they will crown him King of Scotland; they will seat him in old Edina. And then we will have no ‘Union’ with England; not we! We will have our own crown and scepter, and our own royal line; and when I see that day, I will pray to depart in peace, for I shall have seen the salvation of Scotland.”

A suppressed sob, which quickly grew to a prolonged shout, answered this speech, and the Chief turned away and went back to his delayed meal. There was obvious weariness of both flesh and spirit in all, and it was only fitfully and gradually that conversation was resumed. MacArgall eat his pea brose and butter in silence, while Sara and Lady Gordon drank their tea, and talked softly to each other, and to Hector, about the appearance of Prince Charles. But when the Chief had finished his bowl of brose, and was dipping his oatcake in his toddy, Lady Gordon said to him :

“Murdo, you spoke well to-night, as well as you did fifty years ago—and how the clan adore you! Who would be a King, if he could be Chief of his clan? If I was Prince Charles, I should come back as Chief of Clan Stuart. But do you really think he will try again next year?”

“If I did not think so, I had not said it. To Clan Argall I speak nothing but the truth—if I know it.”

“Prince Charles will succeed where his father

failed," said Hector. "He has what his father notably lacked—conciliating and charming manners."

"His father is your King, Hector MacDonald. Speak no ill of the King even in your bedchamber. A man that was wiser than you said that."

"And yet Hector is right," answered Lady Gordon. "My lord thought a man must love the Stuarts well, to bear his presence; and I heard you say yourself, Murdo, that it was hard to fight for such a man."

"I will give you good-night. Blessing to you, one and all, but the talk suits me not. He is the King; King by grace of God—I do not put my opinion before the divine will."

Every eye was fixed on the positive old man, and Revan and Hector stood up, until he closed the door. After a few moments' silence they drew closer together, and began to talk with a freedom not possible in the Chief's presence.

"Children," said Lady Gordon, "it is not easy to make your grandfather listen to a dissenting word; and yet someone should speak to him. I came here for that purpose, and I hope my few words will bring certain things to his remembrance, that he ought not to forget."

"Concerning the King?" asked Revan.

"Concerning the King. The chiefs 'out' in Mar's Rising and the break-up in 1716 will be hard to persuade 'out' again."

“But they will not be asked to come out for King James, but for his eldest son, Prince Charles. In the course of thirty years much is forgotten, and, after all, Lady Gordon, a king can do no wrong,” said Hector.

“The hatred and scorn King James inspired thirty years ago have not been forgotten. I am not a malicious body, but my disappointment and anger is as great to-day as it was when my lord went into hiding after Sheriffmuir. And, Hector MacDonald, the King *can* do wrong. From the first hour of his landing in Scotland, King James made men’s hearts faint and sick. Lord Gordon was in the camp at Perth when he entered it, on the 6th of January, 1716; and as soon as men looked on him, their enthusiasm for the Stuarts melted away. You must remember that Highlanders have no belief in the divine right of kings. They have always associated power with strength, wisdom, and courage. Their legends are full of instances where weak chieftains have been replaced by some hardy, daring kinsman who could effectively lead their clans to forage and victory. When King James showed himself to these little kings of the Highland clans, his appearance filled them with the coldness of despair. They could hardly believe him to be a descendant of the heroic race of Stuart; and they asked each other if this apparition of a king could speak or move.”

“You are very hard on King James the Eighth,

Aunt Athol," said Revan. "Was he indeed so physically wanting in all good qualities?"

"His body, always weak and shuffling, was shaken by his dissipations; he had dull, lazy eyes; sallow cheeks; an imbecile smile; slow, listless movements. He was as haughty and despotic as if he was an acknowledged king with unlimited power. He answered all men, and all bodies of men, in brief, chilling words, as if assured authority had made the adulation of obsequious subjects tiresome to him. He surrounded himself with the most particular etiquette and ceremony, and the number of his dinner courses created a hearty contempt for him, among men who, when in arms, found a little oatmeal and water sufficient."

"But I never heard his courage questioned, Lady Gordon," said Hector.

"You were not born, Hector, when men's hearts were burning with the shame and wrong King James brought them. I was in the middle of the quarrel, for I was at Perth the whole of that fateful month. I remember the day this royal James was persuaded to attend a council of war; and Lord Gordon told me after it, that the King's terror of any warlike preparation which would put him in danger filled the hearts of the Highland chiefs with disgust and despair. Lord Gordon wished, then and there, to send home his clan; and Mar and other leaders began to talk of retreat, as 'necessary for the King's safety.' Then there was almost war in the camp itself. The

clansmen wanted to know what they had been brought to Perth for? Were they to fight like men, or fly like cowards? Had their King come among them to lead them in battle, or only to see how many of his subjects were ready for the shambles? The grim laird of Glenbucket proposed to the loyal clans to put the King in their center and fight to the death around him—a threat which struck the direst terror to the royal heart. Those who wanted to fight and those who wanted to retreat were at open enmity; and doubt and dismay soon spread like a plague. The King had entered the camp on the 16th of January; on the 30th of January the retreat began, at midnight. You know how Highlanders melt away among their mountains; and, silently and heartsick, Mar's army dispersed by hundreds, in the direction of their own particular valleys. Lord Gordon sent home his clan; he himself escaped through Caithness to Orkney, where he found a French vessel going to Sweden; and in Sweden he remained seven years ere I obtained a pardon for him. My case was one of many. Do you think people forget such experiences?”

“But had he no good qualities, Lady Gordon?” asked Hector.

“He had one positive quality—the bitterest, narrowest bigotry. For the rest,” she said, with rising anger and disdain, “he was neither Cæsar nor Nullus; neither a man nor a mouse; neither soldier nor sailor;

nor cardinal, without brains or bravery, made in the figure of a man, but just alive, and that's all. He was brought to Scotland to fight battles and lead good soldiers to victory, and he skulked and whined, and speeched and cried, and having smelled gunpowder and dreamed of a fight, ran away at midnight. If this Prince Charles is anything like his father, we want none of him. I would travel from the Hebrides to the Shetlands to keep men from going out with him. I came resolved to hold back your grandfather, but I fear I shall utterly fail."

"But I assure you, Lady Gordon," said Hector, "that Prince Charles has the opposites of all his father's qualities. He is affable, courageous, and capable of friendship. I have been much with him, and I assure you that his character has inspired me with an enthusiastic affection."

"Why can't we leave the Stuarts alone? A plague on them all! To touch them is to catch calamity," said Lady Gordon.

"We can't leave them alone," answered Sara, "because we are Scots, and we want our own royal line to rule us. So God save the Stuarts!"

"Well, then, is not King George also a Stuart? He is the son of the Princess Sophia, whose mother was the sister of King Charles the First."

"He is on the distaff side," said Revan.

"The distaff side is as good as the sword side, in the English royal house; and the Scotch also. And

George is a Protestant, while the other line is undeniably Catholic. For this reason alone, George will succeed, and Charles will fail!”

At this remark Revan smiled broadly, and asked: “So you think Providence is Protestant, Aunt Athol?”

“Yes. Protestant and Presbyterian,” she answered promptly. “Our young men like to talk for the Stuarts; but to echo the language of their fathers is not to echo their spirit. The living force of Jacobitism is dead.”

“Not so! Not so, Lady Gordon!” cried Hector hotly. “You will see in a few months that it is very much alive. I am now on a mission to all hopeful clans, and will proceed even to Orkney and Shetland, to raise men and money for the cause.”

“Good Heavens, Hector! Has not one expedition with the King of France behind it just been blown to the land of Nowhere? Can you not see that you are fighting against Destiny?”

“Then we will conquer Destiny. She cannot always have her dice loaded. The youth of Scotland are Jacobites at heart. A few days ago I had a message from young MacLauchlan, and he speaks for the whole youth of the Highlands, when he writes ‘a stone lies near to the earth, but, tell Prince Charles, nearer than that is our aid when called for.’ Remember, not an hour ago, not a man of Clan MacArgall would have hesitated, if called then and there to the battlefield.”

"You must remember also, Hector, that they were under the spell of Dugald's chanter. It beguiled even me. But reflection follows the music, and in this case reflection does not step to the war shout."

"Nevertheless," said Sara, "God save Prince Charles! *Gainsay who dare!*" and as soon as she uttered the words the wild music went dirling through their ears and hearts; for Dugald began to play the clan to their homes, and the night silence was invaded and filled with the frenzy and fury of the warlike challenge. Tingling in every nerve they sat listening to the passionate strains, as they went up and down the mountain, and into the corries, and along the strath until they died away in a long-drawn note that made everyone ready to cry out in sympathy.

"The devil is in Dugald's pipes," said Lady Gordon. "I'll not listen to them again! They would make me recant every word I have said! They're not canny. In a religious sense, they are totally without grace. They are paganish. They make men wild! They call for the dirk and the broadsword!" And she wrung her hands, and her voice trembled like the voice of one on the point of weeping aloud.

"King Edward," said Revan, "was obliged to slay the Welsh harpers, ere he could bring the Welsh nation to submission. King George will have to get rid of the pipers, if we want peace in the Highlands. Music is the voice of Freedom, and those old bards and harpers, and our pipers also, are just to-day what

a Gaelic poet described them a thousand years ago:

"They can play tunes,
Trampling things, tightened strings,
Warriors, heroes, and ghosts on their feet;
Ghosts and specters, illness and fever.
They could set in sound lasting sleep
The whole great world,
With the sweetness of the calming tunes,
That the pipers could play."

"'Warriors, heroes, and ghosts on their feet,'
Revan," said Lady Gordon ; " you have named ghosts,
and now I shall see them in every corner of this
haunted house. Sara, light the candle and we will go
to bed ere the night grows dreadful with the coming
of the bodiless."

She rose sighing and gave her hand to Revan.
Hector lit the candle and walked with Sara to the foot
of the stone stairs ; and there the young men stood and
watched the two women ascend the narrow, spiral road
that wound round the central tower, until their forms
and voices were lost in the void ; and even the dull
light of the candle was swallowed up in the dark-
ness.

Then they went back to the hall, and Hector threw
more wood on the fire, drew his chair before the blaze,
and began to explain more particularly his mission
and his hopes. Revan listened silently and without
enthusiasm. His attitude was that of a man who faces
a destiny which he accepts, rather than approves, and

when Hector spoke of his proposed visit to Orkney, he interrupted him sharply with an adverse opinion:

"You need not carry a single hope to the Orkneys," he said; "you are only taking it into the mouth of disappointment. The memory of Earl Patrick Stuart, his brutalities and tyrannies, is as fresh as ever. One hundred and fifty years have passed over his crimes, and the Orcadians have neither forgiven nor forgotten them. I was in Lerwick with the Master of Nairn two summers ago, and the islanders spit on his name with as hearty a hatred to-day as they ever did. They will neither give a man nor a penny to a Stuart, and you need not ask them."

"There is no knowing that, Revan. I have a letter to a certain Captain Paul Varrick, who has a notably swift vessel. Did you happen to hear of him?"

"Yes."

Revan spoke with reluctance, and Hector looked inquiringly at him, keeping silence that Revan might add to his simple affirmative. But Revan did not volunteer another word, so Hector asked:

"Is he a man to be—managed?"

"Not if you took the length of a day, or a year, to manage him." Then with a sudden flash of feeling—"he has a daughter worth going to Orkney to see. Oh, lovely, lovely Thyra Varrick! If her eyes meet yours, you will be spirit-bound, and your feet will not carry you away from Orkney, and your boat will rot and rock at its anchor. Lovely, lovely Thyra!"

“Now you have settled the matter. I should like to see a woman that could come between me and Prince Charles! Oh, that is a thing that never can be!”

“Hector, I am weary of war, and the rumor of it. Let us go to rest. The day is over, and

“‘Night’s doorway is open,
And all unrest
May take refuge
In her pavilion of sleep.’

He was lighting his candle as he murmured the words, and as he stood a moment holding Hector’s hand, a watcher rose silently from the floor and covered up the fire. In a few minutes all was dark and silent in the house of MacArgall. Then came those shades of the bodiless who ask for no man’s leave, but lift the latch unseen, and enter and sit down, peopling the dark and solitary space that girds every day of life around.

The most dangerous temptations nature is liable to are melancholy and impatience. The Chief was impatient, but far from melancholy. He had that dauntless mind that fears no mischance. The destruction of the French fleet did not dash his hopes, for the cause was in his heart, and it is the heart which creates faith. Therefore, he could not be sad beyond a certain measure, nor do his soul such great injury as to permit it to fall from its dignity and firmness.

In the morning he was very early on the hills with the drovers. If there was no fighting to be done, there

was money to be made; and money would be very necessary when the time for fighting came. With Revan and Hector he went from drove to drove, directing which lots were to go to Falkirk and Crieff, and which were to travel as far southward as Barnet and Smithfield. It was a busy and animated scene, and the ladies watched the start from the terrace before the house. Before noon, at least a thousand beasts had begun their long journey, and the Chief was in excellent spirits.

"They will not lose hoof nor horn by the way," he said to Lady Gordon. "The good creatures are in excellent condition, and Tavish says he'll bring me back the price of every head of them."

"Can you trust Tavish?" she asked.

"Can I trust myself?" he answered. "Who ever heard tell of a dishonest drover? Oh! but the men were glad to get away. I wish I could have gone with them! They'll be having a grand time and be bringing back plenty of gold and silver. So, when the day comes, MacArgall can be making up with money what he lacks in men—and that's fair, you know, Athol. Hector," he cried, but Hector had disappeared, and Sara was also missing; and the Chief looked indignantly at his sister, and said:

"You should have kept your eye on the lassie."

"Hector is with her. He will take care of her."

"He'll be making love to her."

"He has made love to her all their lives."

“We are going to have war, and is war time a time for love-making?”

“Men mostly make love then. As soon as they get a commission in arms, they look for a commission in matrimony. That is my observe, Murdo. And if two young hearts are to be one, you’ll not keep them apart with a mouthful of words. That’s a fact before divines.”

“You should have gone with them.”

“Up to Loch Argall? What way would I climb seven hundred feet? Is not Hector MacDonald to your liking?”

“He is, and he is not. Much good he has, but withal that, he is like the magpies, and has a drop of devil’s blood in his veins.”

“Be discreet, Murdo, in any opposing of this matter. Sara has set her heart upon Hector, and what will you do with a woman who has made up her mind? You’ll not move her an inch.”

“It is an astonishing world, Athol; but I’ll be away from it, ere long. Look! woman, at the grass; could anything be greener? And yet a few hot suns, and where will it be? He was a wise man that said, ‘All flesh is as grass.’”

“Yes; for do you not see, Murdo, that in saying so, he likened us to the most living creature made by God? The feet of trouble pass over it, and trample it, the storm beats it, the wind bleaches it, the mower cuts it down, but it always springs again; never tar-

rying for man to sow it, or care for it." Then she went to him, and put her hand on his shoulder, and a mist came over his eyes, and he looked down the strath, and up to the jagged peak of Ben Argall, and asked softly:

"Do you see them?"

"I can see the glimmer of Sara's dress."

"They will be by the hart's well, no doubt."

The Chief judged rightly. Not very far up the mountain side there was a bubbling spring surrounded by trees, and knee-deep in bracken; and there the lovers were resting. The murmur of water, the soft sigh of the wind, and the brooding call of birds filled the cool air. They had talked restlessly, as they walked, of the coming struggle, of the loyal clans, and of Hector's mission; but a spell of silence fell over them as soon as they were seated in the green spot. Sara gazed into the crystal pool with dreamy, intent eyes, as if it was a divining-glass in which she might read her future. Hector clasped her hand and was speechless a while; and the air grew sensitive between them, and the ripple of the water touched their hearts—as fingers touch the strings of an instrument—until their souls rose from the depths of being, and came almost visibly to their faces; until they were both a little beyond themselves, handsomer than usual, more radiating, more sympathetic, more at one with each other. Quite unconsciously they drew closer together, and feeling, which neither sought to re-

strain, soon found speech to be an irresistible necessity.

"Sara," said Hector, in a tone low and passionate, "Sara, I have loved you all my life."

She smiled and shyly turned her face a little toward him.

"And I love you far better now than ever before. May I speak to the Chief? Will you be my wife, Sara? You who are heart of my heart, and soul of my soul!"

"I will be your wife, Hector," she replied.

"You love me, Sara?"

"I know not when my love began; I have always loved you, dear one!"

This confession, though partly anticipated, was very sweet to the young man. It removed the last element of doubt; it gave him a right so strong and personal in the lovely woman at his side that he felt a kind of transformation in his whole nature. Life seemed grander, more to be desired, more full of obligation and purpose, and sweeter, ten thousand times sweeter, for the love that was his, and his only—love not to be shared with any mortal—love without doubt or reservation, his own treasure entirely and forever.

They found now that every topic had a new interest; they lingered until the sun was low westering; they came home hand in hand in the gloaming, and there was little need of explanations. Indeed, the betrothal was an expected event; every man and

woman in Clan Argall regarded it is predestined and, therefore, satisfactory. Only the Chief had any sense of dissatisfaction; he would rather have seen Lord Nairn in Hector MacDonald's place. Nairn's estate was a large one lying just over the mountains, and stretching northward to the seacoast; and the nobleman was in every other respect a fitting mate for Sara MacArgall. The Chief was not certain in his heart that Hector MacDonald was so. But Sara having decided, there was nothing but acquiescence to be thought of.

A week of great happiness followed. Good wishes were flowing to the young couple from every heart near them; and even the fitful, unreasonable Highland weather was wonderfully propitious. In its sunshine for six long sweet days they wandered about the hills, or rested under the firs, dreaming of their future and building fairy castles to pass it in. Hector had not a doubt of Prince Charles's success, and in that case he had been promised a lordship in Sutherland. But his inclinations were toward military and court life; and sitting in the bracken of Ben Argall, with Sara at his side, he talked of their house in Edinburgh; and even considered a dwelling-place for the MacDonalds in London. Wherever the Prince might be placed, there Hector would be, and wherever Hector was, there also would Sara find her home. It was a beautiful dream—if Fortune would only turn it into reality.

The last day of this happy week was wet and stormy. A great gloom was over the ancient house and the lonely valley in which it stood. The lovers sat together silent and thoughtful, smiling occasionally into each other's faces, but manifestly under the influence of the gloom and gust and pitiless rain. The long morning wore away a little wearily, and Hector began to think of his delayed journey; but when Sara came to him in the afternoon he forgot everything again, in her loveliness and charm. She was most becomingly dressed in a gown of rich satin, woven in the colors and check of her clan; and the dark green, with bars of gold and scarlet, falling away from her white shoulders and arms and hanging in long, broad folds to her feet, set off marvelously the fairness of her skin and the brilliancy of her hair. A girdle of Scotch agates, linked and clasped with gold, defined her slender waist; and bracelets of the same clasped her arms above the elbows, confining there the short full sleeves of tartan satin.

“We are going to defy the weather, and have a happy evening,” she said to Hector, as he clasped her in his arms, “we will put down all sorrowful thought, and take up pleasure and song,” and releasing herself from Hector's embrace, she went to her harp, and began to touch the strings to that most enthralling of Jacobite yearnings—

“‘O send Lewie Gordon hame!’”

and the Chief, lifting his glass of Farintosh above his gray head, added the next three lines,

“ ‘ And the lad we dare not name;
Though his back lay at the wa’
Here’s to Him, that’s far awa’! ’ ”

Then the song was chanted together, even Lady Gordon joining in the passionate faith of the chorus:

“ ‘ Weel would I my true love ken
Among ten thousand Highlandmen. ’ ”

Song followed song, and story followed story, till the gloaming brought the evening meal; then in the movement incidental to the spreading of the table, Hector lifted the harp, and, standing beside it, amazed everyone by the masterful manner in which he swept the music from the strings. Revan laid down his book and listened with delight, while the Chief leaped to his feet, and went towards him.

“ Whence do you take the music, Hector? ” he said.

“ From my heart, MacArgall. It comes from there, to my strong fingers. ”

“ Make the strings speak for my pleasure. ”

“ I am the man who is willing, ” answered Hector.

“ Listen to the Song of Prince Charles.

“ ‘ To daunten me, and me so young!
And good King Jamie’s eldest son!
O that is the thing that never can be;
The man is not born that can daunten me!
But set my foot on Scottish land,
And put my broadsword in my hand,
And the man is not born who can daunten me. ’ ”

At this point the door was hastily opened, and a Gael, storm-splashed and weather-worn, came forward rapidly, and falling on one knee before Hector, gave him a letter.

“It is from the Master of Nairn,” he said, after reading it; “and he wishes to see me at once. He says that he has late orders, and trysts me at Cawdor Castle to-morrow night. So I must away at the dawning.” He was evidently much annoyed, and the frown on his face filled the happy room with anxiety and gloom.

“The Good Being bless you, Hector! And may your return be in joy!”

There was a murmur of sympathy from all present at this prayer; and then a great solemnity took the place of music and song. They were to part, and who could tell how or when they would meet again. They sat quietly, with soft words and many silences, and separated with tears, though also with words of trust and affection. For a few minutes Lady Gordon left the lovers alone, and they whispered fondly their abiding affection and certain faithfulness.

“At this moment, beloved,” said Hector, “there are great masses of rain, and there is night, and there is darkness, but yet at this moment the morning is on the way to us; and it will arrive with sunshine and many good hopes. So, too, our morning of love is even now coming swiftly towards us. Take courage, beautiful one! I shall be back very soon, and mean-

while our own matters will grow to ripeness. Fear not!" and his loving look went further than words could reach.

He watched her join Lady Gordon and go slowly up the winding stairs with her; and then he turned abruptly away. The letter of Nairn did not please him. He was offended at its authoritative tone, and he wondered why it had come at all. But he went back to the hall and talked with the Chief and Revan on events and probabilities, until the clock struck eleven. Then all stood up. They knew that the time for parting had come.

"Farewell!" said Hector. "I think that all things will go well with me." And the Chief answered solemnly:

"Thou hast not thy own soul to keep; so then, all may go well with thee."

CHAPTER II

"Lovely Thyra Varrick"

DO we attract events, or are they attracted by us? Who can tell? Certainly Hector knew, as he traversed the mountain passes between Argall and Nairn, that he was on a road leading him to a change of some kind. The way was rough, and an unwonted depression lay heavy on his heart. It was late in the evening when he reached Nairn Castle, and, passing through the solemn shades of the great woods surrounding it, found the dimly lit entrance hall. A servant readily took him to the presence of the Master, and they were soon joined by the Earl of Cawdor and Lord Lovat. Hector could hardly help a feeling of uneasiness. Cruel deeds were not unfrequently done in these lonely castles; and his soul divined at once that something unusual was to be demanded of him. And just then he felt too despondent and weary to struggle against decided things. He knew that he must submit to a majority so powerful and determined.

Nairn did not leave him long in suspense. He ordered food and wine, and as the young man ate, he said:

“MacDonald, I have a late letter from his Majesty King James; and in it he revokes the commission granted you by his son, Prince Charles. Without lessening the power, or prestige of the MacDonalds——”

“Which none living can do, or dare do,” interrupted Hector.

“Which none wishes to do,” corrected Nairn.

“His Majesty thinks that I have more years and experience, and possibly more influence among the clans, than you have; the reason being an evident one. I venture not only my head,—you also do that,—but I venture likewise the lands of my ancestors, and the patrimony of those who are to come after me.”

At these words Hector took his commission from his breast and laid it on the table. “I can give his Majesty, at least, ready and swift obedience,” he said, “and I acknowledge his wisdom, and therefore submit myself to your orders, Nairn.”

Such ready compliance from a MacDonald was not expected, and was received with a relief that expressed itself in a sudden access of high spirits and hospitality. But Hector was on his guard every moment, and after he had been told that at present there was no special commission for him, he began to urge his speedy departure. “It was so long since he had seen his family,” he said, “and he would fain go back to the Hebrides.”

“That will be the best journey you can take,”

answered Nairn. “Then you can find out for me what force the MacDonald can put under arms, and what monies he will be able to send us for ammunition.”

“I have now no authority to question the MacDonald,” said Hector; “and he would not deign to answer such questions, unless authorized with all proper forms.”

“I beg the MacDonald’s pardon,” replied Nairn; “I will send a messenger with the proper ceremony.”

“It were well to do so.”

Then Hector suddenly turned the conversation upon the MacArgall. He spoke warmly of the Chief’s loyalty, and said: “It was his intention to lead his own clan, when the question came to Claymore.”

Cawdor thought Revan would be a better leader, but Lovat said:

“No, no! The old men are the young men in this quarrel. They have some sense, and they have mense, and they are nearer to King James than the lads.” This opinion was warmly supported by Hector, who was sure, if Chief Murdo led the MacArgalls, they would fight round him till the last man was slain.

“I would not deny that,” said Cawdor. “I saw Murdo MacArgall at Sheriffmuir; and he towered on that wretched field like some gigantic wraith of revenge. His big sword shone, as it smote right and left incessantly; it was more like a person than a blade

of steel. He left three hundred of his clan dead there—that tells the story.”

Lovat laughed as he added: “Anyone can lead the MacArgalls in a fight. I remember when I was a youngster, that if any quarrel occurred in these parts everyone asked: ‘Who beside the MacArgalls?’ for no matter who were *second* the MacArgalls behooved to be *first* in any fight. Chief Murdo has experience of sword ways and plenty of it.”

Here Hector pleaded weariness, and asked permission to retire. He had said things wisely so far, and something warned him to go away ere the moment of folly came. But just as he was at the door Nairn spoke the words he had been longing to say, and which Hector had been trying to avoid :

“The Lady Sara? Is she in Edinburgh with her Aunt Gordon?”

“She is at Argall House.”

“Is she well?”

“She is well.”

“And lovely as ever?”

“Lovely as ever—more so, I think.”

The words appeared to be commonplace politeness, but they evoked a certainty that needed no words. Nairn saw in the sudden light leaping into Hector’s eyes, and in the unconscious joyful poise of his head, a confirmation of the thing he feared; and in the instant of motiveless silence that fell between them, he understood that Hector had won, and that he had lost.

No speech could have been as certain as this overwhelming influence of words unsaid.

Hector knew it as well as Nairn. He was angry at this betrayal of himself. Why had his soul not kept better guard over his voice and eyes—yea, and over his telltale silence? Alas! personal pride will never keep quiet; it must assert itself, even if it be folly and risk to do so. A deep chagrin swallowed up all his happiness; he could think of nothing comfortable; and the vast gloomy space of his room soon grew terrifying. He passed some wretched hours in the company of, he knew not what, wretched wraiths; but conscious of such sorrowful presence that he found himself saying over and over the prayer in his breviary for their repose:

“ ‘ Grant them eternal rest, O God,
With Thy saints forever.
For Thou art merciful;
May they rest in peace.’ ”

And some time after midnight the room became void and quiet, and he fell asleep, and when he awoke it was morning.

With consciousness came an overpowering impulse to depart from Nairn Castle at once. He waited for no further interview, but, leaving a courteous message for the three great lords, he made his way as swiftly as possible to the town of Nairn. On the journey he did not try to decide on any movement. He contented himself with the knowledge that he was getting away from something inimical. But after reaching the inn

and refreshing himself, he began to seriously consider his position.

He had said that he wished to go to his home in the Hebrides, but in reality he had no such desire. His last letter to the MacDonald had been somewhat boastful; he could not follow it as the messenger of his own dismissal from the post of honor which had so much elated him. To return to MacArgall was out of the question. He knew that Sara would sympathize with his disappointment, and that without shadow of blame; but he knew also that he could not endure MacArgall's questions, Revan's silent glance, and Lady Gordon's more evident suspicions. The Orkneys he hardly took into account, especially as the commission which would have taken him to a country so remote had been revoked. The journey most in accord with his feelings was to go to Paris and interview Prince Charles. He was burning not only to exonerate himself, but also to learn for what real reason he had been superseded by the Master of Nairn.

There was no shipping at Nairn but a fishing-boat that was going to Wick, and in this boat he took passage. At Wick he wrote to his family and to the MacDonald, saying to the latter, "Put not the oak before the heather.* It will not be well for the MacDonalds in any way to do so; this I have learned through pain and unkindness." To his family he

* The oak is the emblem of the Stuarts, the heather of the MacDonalds.

gave assurance of his well-being, but he left the future blank as to his intentions. For at Wick they changed. He found no ship there which would carry him to the Continent. He spent several anxious days in waiting for what did not come, and in them grew indifferent to his purpose, and ready for any change that Fate might send. In this mood he was accosted one day by the captain of a small vessel lying at anchor.

“Sir,” he said, “you seem to be waiting, or looking for something. No offense is meant, sir.”

“And where none is meant, none need be taken,” answered Hector. “I am looking for a vessel of some kind, that will carry me to the coast of France.”

“Which you will hardly get here, sir. But go with me as far north as Thurso.”

“I shall be more out of the way at Thurso than I am at Wick.”

“But at Thurso you will find plenty of craft going to Kirkwall in the Orkneys, and at Kirkwall there is always Dutch shipping which would land you at The Hague, or at Amsterdam.”

“I had not thought of that. When do you sail?”

“This hour, if you are ready,” replied the captain.

So that evening Hector passed around Noss Head with its fateful chain of old castles, Wick and Ackergill, and the haunted Girnigo of evil fame and deeds, and on the second day out found shelter from an ad-

verse wind at the ancient town of Thurso. But on the way he had caught sight of the Orkneys to the north, and had been enchanted by the magnificence of the view, and as they rounded Duncansby Head a passing remark of the captain made a great impression on him. Pointing out the locality of John o' Groat's house, he said:

"The Marquis of Montrose landed near there one hundred years ago, with two thousand Orcadians. They were going to fight for King Charles the First, but they just melted away like snow before Cromwell's Roundheads."

At the moment the remark seemed only to pass in and out of his consciousness, but as he lingered in the old town of Thor, it began to take root. If Montrose could gather two thousand men in Orkney for the Stuarts, why could he not do likewise? The question recurred to him again and again, and always without any negative in the answer. So one day he came to a sudden resolution—he would go to Orkney and do wonders for the Stuarts there; then he would visit Prince Charles, and show him what he had accomplished on ground said, by every Highlander, to be hopeless. It is the difficult, yea the impossible, which attracts youth; and from the moment that Hector made this resolution he was anxious to reach Kirkwall.

At Thurso it was easy to get a passage northward, and soon after midnight on the following day Hector

saw the wonderful cliffs of Hoy; bleak, cold, clear-cut against the gray north sky. A whispering mystery pervaded everything. The mellow beauty of yesterday was mingling with the dawn of another morning, and the aurora waving, in fantastic shapes of marvelous colors, its spears of light from east to west, from the horizon to the zenith. The unbroken stillness of the sea and sky was ghostly and magical; but a little later the air was thick with millions of sea birds, thick as with snow in a snowstorm; and then amid the ærial clamor, and unceasing beat and whir of wings, came the slow, wonderful sunrise, and the changing of the colorless water to deep blue, and the modified radiance of the misty day-dawn. Every Highlander is at heart a poet, and Hector's soul drank this beauty gladly, as slowly the white-winged vessel stole through the mist, till she dropped her anchor in the noble bay of the old, old town of Kirkwall.

By this time the sun had fully risen, and he saw the capital of the Orkneys, with the massive Cathedral of Saint Magnus looming grandly over it. Up through the narrow flagged streets he went, to a comfortable inn in the Parliament Close, being filled anew at every step with a strange sense that somehow, and at some time, he had been in the place before. He was in fact walking back into antiquity and seeing a city yet in the twilight of the Sagas. The Norse atmosphere of men and things was in all the gray, still streets, and the Norse murmur was in

the cold, bright sea, as it beat against the lowly land—the Fortunate Isles.

He felt singularly at home, and, with a lighter heart than he had known for many days, ate and drank, and made the necessary arrangements for his comfort. The place pleased him, and the few men he had met at the pier when he landed pleased him—mighty, modest, blue-eyed giants, who looked him straight in the face without a shadow of unkindness, bowing gravely as they did so. He was astonished. He had yet to learn that Norse fishers are gentlemen. So light his heart had become! What could it mean? He concluded it was Sara, and yet he had not thought as much of Sara as of his own affairs; and this morning as he looked into the queer streets, little more than a yard wide, and watched the men and women he saw in them, he felt as if he had left Sara in a world far and far away from him.

The sense of isolation was comforting. His soul had been wounded and needed this retirement. He began at once to cast off that sense of injury which had made him so unhappy and purposeless. At Thurso he had written to Sara, telling her he was going to see Prince Charles. In this letter he spoke bitterly of the Master of Nairn, and confided to her his interference with his commission. He knew that Sara would place Nairn's ill-will to jealousy, and so he insured him an unpleasant refusal if he tried in Hector's absence to press his own suit. He sent this

letter by a special messenger, and the thought of the gold paid for the service brought him to a consideration of his finances. He took his money from the various places in which he carried it, and found that he had with him nearly two hundred pounds; a sum that would last him indefinitely in that primitive life. Besides which, there were five hundred pounds to his credit in the bank at Inverness. On the whole, then, he felt that he might take his ease and rest, and grow strong in heart before beginning the canvass which was to make Charles Stuart ashamed of his ingratitude and want of foresight.

Suddenly he recollected the royal letter given him to “our trusty friend Captain Paul Varrick,” and with remembrance, very naturally, Revan MacArgall’s comment on its uselessness, and his ejaculation on the beauty of Paul Varrick’s daughter, “*lovely, lovely Thyra Varrick!*” He said the words over three or four times, and they tasted sweet on his lips; and he resolved very soon to test the Captain’s loyalty, and see his daughter’s beauty. It was mere curiosity so far as the daughter was concerned, he was sure of that; no woman on earth could depose Sara from her place as mistress of his heart and life. And he sat dreaming of the charming girl, until he was compelled to utter her name aloud, in order to satisfy a little his longing for her presence.

His dream of Sara was broken by a fisher singing a Norse fishing song. He went to the window and

looked out. The man was going down the street with oars over his shoulder, and a tall, fair girl walked at his side. She walked like a princess, and spoke to her companion as one used to be obeyed. Hector was interested, it was so different to the attitude of the Highland fisherwoman. He put on his cap and walked after them to the pier; then he saw that the fishing boats were leaving the harbor; hundreds of them going silently out to sea in that exquisite light, that was neither dayshine nor moonshine. And in all the open doorways women were standing, watching with long, serious gaze the last glimmer of the white sails.

He went back to the inn like a man in dreamland and sat long at his window. The stillness of the place was remarkable, and it induced in him a delicious content, such as he had never felt before; and yet through its restful peace the thought of war drifted. If he could only raise a regiment of such men as he had seen, for Prince Charles, what a triumph it would be! He took out the Prince's letter to Captain Varrick and looked at it thoughtfully. He had not been counter-ordered on this subject. Nairn had not spoken of Captain Varrick; and he felt that he might lawfully consider himself as yet bound to fulfill the instruction of the Prince respecting what was to be effected through the Orcadian.

In the morning he dressed himself with great care. Traveling he had worn a cloth suit of the style usual

to the gentlemen of the period, but in going to call on Varrick he assumed the tartan, which testified to his nationality and his politics. He told himself that, being a royal messenger, it was fitting he should do so; but Vanity had her full share in his decision. He knew that the splendid coloring and picturesque make of his Highland dress added much to his natural good looks, and though he was going about the business of kings, he was very much influenced by the memory of Revan's glowing ejaculation, “*lovely, lovely Thyra Varrick!*”

His appearance attracted great attention. The women, sitting with their water jugs by the fountains, looked at him with modestly open admiration; the men gave him by their salutation both welcome and respect; and he stayed one of them, and asked the way to Captain Varrick's house. He was pointed out a rambling gray stone dwelling which he reached by the seashore; in fact, though it was beyond the boundary of the high tides, it stood boldly on its granite ledge, directly over a rocky beach covered with tangle and brilliant red seaweed.

The Captain was standing at the door smoking and watching the sea. He was always watching the sea. He had no faith in its smiles, and no fear of its wrath; but it was a habit of his blood never to give it a chance to get the better of him. Just then he was looking at its dimpling surface with toleration; there was no immediate warfare between them. A lustrously white

bird lay on the blue water, and a multitude of terns, like handsome feathers, were balancing themselves upon the little breakers, swiftly weaving their wings together. He had a smile for the birds, but his interest was fixed on a large ship, which, with all canvas set, was lazily dropping away to the south.

The appearance of Hector diverted his attention. A frown passed over his face as he noticed the dress of the Gael, and he did not go a few steps to meet him, as was his custom when a welcome visitor was nearing his dwelling. He was a man thick-set and broad-faced, swift-eyed and ruddy-fair, with the frank, fearless manner of a North Sea rover; and as Hector came near, he was the first to speak.

"A good day, sir," he said; "whom, then, dost thou seek?" His voice was the hoarse, melancholy voice of a constant seafarer, and his tone brusque but courteous.

"I am sent to see one Captain Paul Varrick."

"I am the man. At whose bidding hast thou come to seek Paul Varrick?"

Hector then handed him the Prince's letter, and he read it without any appearance of pride or pleasure, holding it in his hand afterward some moments before he said, "These tidings have already been heard far and wide."

"The Prince relies on your help in some matters of importance, Captain. I know so much."

"I am ever good at need, to my friends, sir; but

Prince Charles is not my friend. I have washed my hands of him. He has lost me a ship, and in this letter he makes no mention of the money he owes me. For him I will no more fly in the face of good-fortune?”

“You will think of the matter, Captain, and later you may change your mind.”

“Later I shall wax to no more folly. My mind is fixed. I will let this man alone. I will not back him up in any way; not while my life days last. But come thou into my house and I will talk with thee. I can tell thee one thing: I am in no hurry to meet trouble. And as for these Stuarts, their evil destiny follows them, even in their dreams. Something, or someone, always stands in their way—even the winds of Heaven are against them. No mortal man can help their quarrel. Come in and rest thee. What is thy name?”

“Hector MacDonald.”

“Thou art a man of many friends. Come into my house.”

They turned into a flagged passage, and Varrick opened a door at his right hand. It let into a room which caused an involuntary exclamation of pleasure from Hector—a large room with a fire of peat and driftwood on the stone hearth, and much handsome furniture of oak, elaborately carved. But these things were only background for curious and valuable ornaments from many parts of the world; costly

porcelain from Holland and China, corals and Venetian work from the Middle Sea, birds of marvelous plumage in glass cases, dried flying fish, treasures of amber from the Baltic and of gorgeous shells and seaweeds from the tropics; and, mingling with all, the ivory and sandalwood, the strange bowls, and boxes and beads, and little gods, which were the spoils from the sacred cities of the Ganges—cities then ruled by native princes, full of perils and malign enchantments, remote and unsubstantial as ancient fables.

Every strange object was a text for Varrick; and as he shortly indicated the story of each, he revealed the fact that his own story must be one of marvelous and romantic adventure. But at this hour Hector was most anxious to secure the friendship and help of such a man for the cause of the Stuarts. He talked to no purpose. Varrick only reiterated the fact, that in his experiences with that royal family he had found them ungrateful and unreliable. He had already lost money by meddling in their affairs, and he would have no more dealings with them.

“I hired them the *Sea King*—a good ship,” he continued; “and I bought five hundred stands of arms for the man who calls himself King James; and here come orders for ‘our trusty servant’ to find another ship, and no mention of the debt owing me. I think it no honor to give my money to the Stuarts; and it is not my pleasure to peril my life for them. As a family, they are being cut down, as one would cut



HE WAS SPELLBOUND.



down a tree, joint by joint, but the last crash will come, and I care not to be near it.”

“Then you will not help at all? Oh, yes, you will surely help?”

“I will neither back the Stuarts, nor go against them. There is a broad way between these two ways.”

As he spoke the door moved slowly inward, and Thyra Varrick stood in the open space. In a moment her eyes caught Hector's eyes, and then it was, as Revan said it would be, he was spellbound by her loveliness, and his whole being absorbed by her astonishing beauty.

She was very tall, and nobly formed. Her hair was of rich, light-brown color, and, though partially confined by an amber comb on the top of her head, fell in long, bright waves about her; blown by the sea winds into the most picturesque confusion. Her face was oval in form, her features perfect, her complexion beyond expression delicate and lovely. Her eyes were deeply violet in color, mysterious, fascinating, and shaded by long lashes; and her mouth, shaped like Cupid's bow, was rosy, smiling, and tender. Without a doubt she was fleshly perfect; and she apparently owed little to her dress, which was only a dark-blue flannel gown, closed to her white throat and falling to her feet. But as she stood thus in the open door, with one hand full of tangle and purple and scarlet seaweeds, she was a revelation of womanly loveliness,

of visible feminine sweetness, that subjugated the heart by its simple presence.

A fierce, abrupt passion, flaming up at the first sight of her, took entire possession of Hector. All his past was consumed to ashes by it. His home in the Hebrides, his Prince in Paris, his love in the strath of MacArgall, they were tales that were told and forgotten. In an instant he became the thrall of a passion so great, and so importunate, that it was as resistless as one of the great forces of nature.

Varrick ceased speaking; he saw that Hector had become all sight, and that he heard nothing that was said. Then there came an instant of that strange silence, when all understand that a star is rising or falling, that a fight is over, or a destiny decided. In this case, it was Hector's destiny. This moment had been waiting for him, and Thyra's first glance warned him of it. The captain understood it as it related to himself. He smiled sarcastically; he was quite aware of his daughter's beauty and of the power it exercised; but his look at Hector said as plainly as words could have done:

"So, then, this is thy loyalty. A woman drives it into a corner at once. It is just as I thought." But he rose and said, "Thyra, this is Major MacDonald. Give him some welcome," and she lifted her eyes to his eager gaze, and in that moment he wished to kiss her ten thousand times.

Then Thyra went to hang up the long strand of

tangle behind the parlor door, saying, “It is to tell us how the weather is going to be.” And Hector pretended ignorance, and so he went to her side and watched her, and even touched her hand, while his soul drank in her simple words:

“Hast thou not heard that if the tangle be wet then we shall have rain; and if it be dry then we shall have sunshine?”

He had heard it from his childhood, but from Thyra’s lips it seemed a new and wonderful fact. Then the tangle fell, and they lifted it together, and together hung it up again, laughing like children at play. And there was no human reason at all for their laughter, only Destiny. The captain watched them with a grim sarcasm. Many a man he had seen smitten like Hector, and for none of them was he sorry but for Robert Thorson. Robert he loved in his masterful way, and it was to Robert Thorson he was determined to give Thyra, when he would make up his mind to give her to anyone.

He sat still and watched them, watched Thyra go to a mirror and confine with exquisite art her golden, wind-blown hair with her amber comb. Her uplifted arms, her stately form, her radiant face, made her a living picture that held Hector spellbound. He forgot Captain Varrick entirely, and Varrick scornfully remembered how anxious he had been to please him, and with what interest he had listened to his tales of strange cities, and sea wonders, and adventures.

Just at this time Thyra had begun to spread the table for the midday meal, and it was a charming sight to Hector to see her hands among the white linen, and glass and china; to see her cutting the bread, and making the butter into little crinkled pats, but as Paul Varrick did not ask him to eat with them, it was evidently time to go away. He made the best of the leave-taking. It gave him an opportunity of exhibiting his fine person, and manners, and even dress, and he took every advantage of it; but Thyra's manner indicated no special or unusual interest. She gave him one glance that thrilled him to the center of his being, and appeared to be quite unconscious that she had done so. It was apparently a mere digression from the more important affair of the dinner-table. But at the last moment Varrick's heart troubled him; he felt that he was wanting in the national virtue of his country—hospitality; and he tried to atone for it by an adieu, which invited a future and more friendly intercourse.

For a moment Thyra looked at Hector as he stood with her father outside the door. It was the Glengarry cap with its eagle feather that attracted attention. "What a becoming head-dress!" she thought; "it makes a man look like a man should look. And he is truly very much to my liking; how black are his eyes! and his mustache! None of our men wear the mustache; it is very becoming. I must go and tell Cousin Maran about him."

Such were her thoughts, and a dreamy smile of satisfaction accompanied them. But as her father re-entered the house, she put both thoughts and smile away, and met his fatherly nod and steady look of inquiry with one of the most ordinary kind, affectionate and confidential, but indicating no particular concern or curiosity.

He was silent a few minutes, but restless; walking about the room, and lifting and putting down various little ornaments of which he was usually very careful. Thyra knew better than to open the conversation; she went quietly about her duties, humming to herself, and, when they were finished, drew forward her wheel and distaff and sat down to spin until dinner was served.

“Asta is so slow,” she remarked. “She is ever late with the meat. She is little to my mind.”

“Then rid thyself of her. Who is to thy mind? What did you think of the young man that has just been here? Is he not much of a man?”

“I have known all my life good men, and men good to see, so then, I am not out of my senses about a tartan kilt and a velvet jacket and an eagle’s feather.”

“That is the truth, Thyra. Thou art one of the wise women, and God knows how few they be. Now there is Robert Thorson—if he were dressed like a Gael he would look——”

“Like a fool! Robert in his blue flannel is twice the man this dandy Gael could ever be.”

“Yet I advise thee to be careful of him. Thou art a very cat of a woman, and his heart, I see, is to be a very mouse in thy claws. Mind this, he will be hard to deal with, fickle yet obstinate—and on some day the catcher is caught.”

Thyra laughed merrily as she answered, “If I am not caught till this Gael catch me, I shall go free to the grave. What heart I have is thine only.”

“But the time comes for all girls to marry, and I think thou hadst better name thy wedding-day; then I will speak to Robert Thorson, and he shall make thee a wife.”

“I will not leave thee, father—not yet. And I am not sure about Robert; a girl should be in love with her husband. I know not anything about love. Wert thou ever in love, father?”

“I have loved once—yes.”

“Then I also wish to love once.”

“I fear this young Highlandman. It was easy to see he went over head in love with thee. And he would be nothing to my wish. I tell thee plainly he shall not have thee! Many things I have against him. He is not of thy race; he is not of thy religion—I am sure he is a Papist—and he is not of thy rank. He has lived with princes, and in camps and courts, and there is not a prouder clan in the wide world than these MacDonalds. I dreamed a dream last night, and this man was in it. I like it not.”

“Well, father, nothing will come from him. There

is little risk of that. But he is a man to be much noticed, and I will not be put behind. Thou wouldst like it so. If I am not civil to him, very civil indeed, some others will be. As thou knowest, there are plenty of pretty girls in Kirkwall, and a man so unlike other men will not be let alone by them. It is to our house he came first; and I am not in the mind of letting any other woman take a lover from me. Wouldst thou like to be outsailed? ”

“Thou hast too many lovers already; so it goes that people speak ill of thee.”

“Few women do people speak well of.”

“Well, the rumor has gone abroad that thou and Robert are to be man and wife.”

“If Robert is the worst fate I have to bear, lightly shall I bear it; but there is a right and a wrong time for all things, and it is not the right marrying time with me. I am not weary of thee yet, father; for there is none like thee.”

Varrick looked happy at her words, and he stood still a moment and looked at his lovely daughter smiling, and spinning, and saying such pleasant words to him. He had no heart to urge her further. He had, indeed, little to lean upon, but he had at least let Thyra know that there could be no question of marriage between her and the stranger; and she had never yet disobeyed him in anything. Why, then, should he distrust her on his own fears? That would be a manifest injustice.

So the days wore fretlessly on, and Thyra sat spinning to her thoughts—the long, long thoughts of youth and hope. But after the evening meal Captain Varrick walked down to the pier to see the boats go out, and Thyra knew it was his custom to stop at the inn afterward and drink a glass of toddy, and smoke a pipe with such of his acquaintances as happened to be present. Therefore, as soon as he was out of sight, she said to herself:

“Now I shall go and tell Cousin Maran all about this young man. And what I do not know she will find out; and it will be something new for us to talk about.”

She did as she was minded, and her light, swift steps soon took her to a house about half a mile further up the beach; the dwelling of the well-to-do widow of Captain Christian Flett, first cousin of Captain Paul Varrick. Maran Flett had been the friend and confidant of Thyra for many years. She was old enough to be Thyra's mother, but perhaps of this very circumstance the affection of the older woman was all the more motherly and sincere. There was no room in their intercourse for rivalry of any kind; and the girl's great beauty and many lovers were a source of supreme pride and interest to Mistress Flett.

She saw Thyra coming, and went to meet her. And Thyra quickened her steps, and was soon in the arms of the rosy-faced middle-aged woman. She was not an Orcadian. Captain Flett had met her in a Fife

village, where his vessel had been driven by stress of weather; and he thought so highly of her Scotch beauty and shrewd common-sense that he had gone back, there voluntarily the next year to ask her to marry him. She had lived very happily for some years with her Norse husband; and now lived very happily on the little estate and comfortable sum of money which he had left her.

Only one trouble had come to her—Captain Varrick’s indifference to her. She thought it the most natural thing in the world that, being a widower, he would marry his cousin’s widow. People generally thought so, and she had suffered much mortification from the failure of the evidently fair arrangement. Indeed, it was whispered Paul Varrick had made his indifference more positive and pronounced than was necessary; though some asserted Maran’s too effusive affection deserved the abrupt rejection it received. But years had apparently healed this wound, and if Maran did not visit Paul’s house, except on such occasions as included all his acquaintances, Thyra was constantly with her, and that without Paul’s opposition or even limitation; so that the habit of affection was both warm and confidential.

“Dear Maran,” said Thyra, “how goes it with thee to-day? I was coming before, but——”

“I am not bad, considering—and why didn’t you come before? You left Barbara Valzain to tell me of the visitor you had. She is an ill-bred, forwardsome

girl, and I told her if she could only learn to hold her tongue, such a thing as a husband might cast up for her."

"I will tell thee why I did not come sooner, Maran. I thought the visitor might come back in the afternoon, but he did not; and besides, father was jealous of him at once, and began talking of Robert Thorson to me. The stranger is a Scot."

"He could hardly be better."

"I mean a Highlander. He wore the grandest dress, and he is the handsomest man I ever saw."

"I don't think so much of the Highlanders. They are all tainted with Jacobitism and Popery."

"Father said he was certain to be a Papist."

"Your father is a narrow-minded man anent some things, Thyra. I have no objections to the Stuarts if they would only win; but I think it right to hold with the side that is uppermost. It is natural to believe Providence knows best what is good for Scotland. Many a time my father—honest man—used to say, 'You may cast more bread on the Stuart water than you'll ever find again. No, no; at present I'm for the Hanovers; I would be for the Stuarts if they were in power; but as things are, they can never do me any good, but perhaps make Buchan a lord, or my brother-in-law, Willie Morrison, a sheriff; or the like of that. I am for the Hanovers.'"

"I care neither for one nor the other. I am for the Highlander that came to-day. He is a splen-

did man, and no other girl shall take him from me.”

“You will be having your fun, Thyra, no matter who suffers, but come ben the house, and tell me all about him.”

Then it was evident that Thyra, in spite of her apparent indifference, had taken good heed of the stranger—of his eyes and hair, his form and height, the expression of his handsome face, the clothes he wore, the gestures he made and his conversation with her father. She was in the midst of a description of him as he stood by her side hanging up the tangle, when there was the sound of swift footsteps approaching. Both women listened, and both said at the same moment:

“It is Robert Thorson.”

He came into the room in his sea-beaten beauty, a man straight-faced, wise of speech, swift of action, masterful, and generous. He could swim like a seal, and was the fastest runner in the Islands; his yellow hair was crisp and curly with sea salt, and his blue shirt open at the throat—a modest, shy hero, of great size and strength, who had been to regions of tremendous heat and tremendous cold, and shirked the trial of neither. With every kind of life pertaining to the sea Robert was familiar; but most of all, he was a notable whale fisher, a brave harpooner, trampling over mountains of ice, triumphing over sea monsters that smashed his boat with a blow, and running out

in league-long chases a thousand fathoms of line. Paul Varrick trusted him like his own soul, and they owned together a boat for the deep sea fishing, to which they had given the name of the *Meum and Tuum*. And to this man Paul was willing to give Thyra, for he knew that Robert loved her with a great and true affection.

But the real hero is always modest; and Robert, who feared neither the monsters of the deep, nor heat, nor cold, nor stormy winds, and who had stood patient, watchful, calm at the helm in the hour of shipwreck, was shy and fearful in the presence of Thyra. He adored her and he trembled before her. He would have given his life to make her happy, but he could not find the courage to tell her so.

He had been quickly told of the Scot who visited his partner; and his beauty and fine appearance had been magnified to him. Then some instinct of his unselfish love warned him of some danger to Thyra, and learning that she had gone to her Cousin Flett's, he followed her there; hoping to walk home with her, and to find some suitable words to say.

As it happened, Thyra was in a mood for his company. She was not going to give up her old love, even if a new love should have come into her life. She thought also that in walking home they might meet Hector. All the girls were yet at the public fountains, and in the bewitching light and glorious calm, who would not be out to enjoy the heavenly hours?

So she met Robert with a frank freedom of manner that almost intoxicated him with joy. She said, “Thou art the man I was wishing for! Wilt thou convoy me home?”—she stretched out her hand and he took it, and they went along the beach together like two happy children. Maran watched them with a look in her face that was not quite pleasant, for there had suddenly entered her mind memories not favorable to either Paul Varrick or Robert Thorson. The first had lightlied her love, and made her a speculation to the islands; the latter had in another way given her just as great a slight. She had offered him house room and board with her, and that at such a rate, and with such advantages, as could not be refused except for personal reasons. And, though Robert had denied any personal reason, no one believed him. Had he not taken board with Annie Valzain? And was he not paying double the money Maran Flett asked him? The gossips had a score of conclusions for this condition, and, though they had to invent every one of them, Maran was as sorely wounded and offended as if they were true. So, then, she had a grievance against Paul Varrick and Robert Thorson, and she was a Fife woman, and not likely to forget it.

“Here is a pretty kettle of fish,” she said to herself, as she shut and locked her door, “and it is untelling what may come of it. If what Thyra says be half true, this Scot is a nonesuch in his line, and Rob-

ert Thorson is another in his line; and where will Paul Varrick come in between them? I am not sorry for Paul. I would like well to see him drink the cup of scorn he mixed for me. I mind yet that night I said a few loving words to him, and he stood up and buttoned his coat, and put on his hat, as if he was feared for me! I'm not forgetting it, Paul Varrick! It is a queer world, and if Thyra, who is a contrary creature, sets her heart on this Scot, I will not hinder true love, not I! He is a Scot, and I am a Scot, and Heaven knows these Norsemen have left off sucking their thumbs centuries gone by; they can fight their own battles, and take what they want without me helping them to it." To such thoughts she fell asleep, for it is the heart wounds inflicted by our fellow creatures that remain unhealed; while those that come from God are sanative, remedial, and often strangely comforting.

And meanwhile, while Maran fretted her soul into troublous dreams, Thyra and Robert walked hand in hand along the sea-shore. In the exquisite light they looked like Immortals. For once they were sweetly consonant, and there was little need of speech between them. Thyra's wordless presence was beatitude enough. But as they began to climb the rocks, Robert put Thyra's arm within his own, and he lifted her hand and kissed it, saying in a voice so low that it amazed him:

"Sweet Thyra, how I love thee!"

She looked up and smiled, and had he then been brave enough to clasp her to his heart, and kiss her lips, and ask her promise, it might perchance have been given—perchance! But alas for love that misses its opportunity! Can it ever return and find that heavenly hour again? Or has Hope sown what Love shall never reap? Silently they reached the door of the Varrick house, and there they lingered, standing hand in hand, until Paul came out and said:

“It grows late, Robert, and there are many to-morrows.”

And none of the three noticed the dark figure of Hector sitting at the foot of a great rock and watching them. But he was a link in that chain of invincible necessity which says to mortals, “Whatever is, could not but so have been.”

CHAPTER III

A Daughter of Concealment.

IF Hector had passed through the gates of reincarnation into Orkney, he could hardly have ignored more completely his previous existence. Any remembrance of it caused him to knit his brows, to rise hastily and plunge the more deeply into his present life. He found it full of interest. There was something tangible to overcome; something sweetly visible to win. He could thoroughly estimate his position, and if he carried it, his reward was a present and a lasting one, even the love, and the hand, of the most beautiful creature he had ever seen. And Prince Charles' rewards were words cast into the air; nobody knew that he would ever redeem them; nobody really trusted that he would have the desire, or the honor, to redeem them.

Being a MacDonald, he was accustomed to the sight, and sound, and labor of the sea, and he took naturally to the life of the sea, which, indeed, in the Orkneys was one of continual romance and adventure, as well as of mere business and subsistence. From Kirkwall's deep harbor ships of great size went to and fro in the world; one had just returned from

Madagascar; and there were two taking in their last fresh water and stores before proceeding to the extreme northern ports of America, with their supplies for the Hudson's Bay Company. Heroes of the floods and the wilderness, conquerors of terrific wild animals, patient bearers of hunger and cold, brave fighters of the cruel, wily, wild men of those regions, were in them; and Hector never wearied of the tales they could tell him.

It was soon noticed that Paul Varrick and Hector were much together; and men and women invented many reasons, mostly evil ones, for this companionship. Some said that Varrick was privately a Jacobite, a Stuart man; it was even possible that Hector had bought him, and in that case the Islands might be led into serious trouble. Women were sure that he wanted to marry Thyra to Hector. It was evident that the young man was rich and noble, and well known. Not a few supposed Hector might be Varrick's own son by some Scotch woman. His cousin Flett had married a Fife girl—who could tell what alliance Varrick might have formed in the strange countries he had visited? After all, Thyra might not be as rich as she thought she would be. The subject was a most serviceable topic for social gossip; it was so many-sided, taking in, not only Paul and Hector, and Thyra and Robert Thorson, but also Maran Flett; for Hector had quite captivated Varrick's cousin, and was living and boarding in her house,

But though everyone was talking of this singular friendship and its rapid growth, there was really nothing singular in it. Men of fifty years old are often greatly attracted by young men. If they are bright and handsome, of good birth and not in want of money, and yet desirous of the company of their elders, they pay them a very subtle and attractive compliment.

Among the men of his own age Paul found few to do him reverence. All of them had gone through difficulties and dangers they considered quite as remarkable as those of Varrick. Many of them thought Paul Varrick gave himself unnecessary admiration; others thought he assumed an air of superiority that had no foundation but money to rest on; and not a few looked down on him from the Kirk point of view, for he was not as mindful of Sabbath-Day ordinances as he should have been, nor as generous concerning stipends and religious expenses as people thought his wealth demanded. Therefore, Hector's frank admiration was pleasant to him. Had it been mere talk, he would not have been caught by any amount of praise; but the young man sought his company constantly; repeated his stories, and insisted on hearing them over again for the pleasure of the company. Indeed, he flattered him so naturally, that it would have been unnatural not to believe in applause so hearty and enthusiastic.

But Paul went no further than this; he was grati-

fied, but only to a certain extent. His infatuation did not blind him to real interests at stake. He never for a moment lowered his estimation of Robert Thorson; never, for a moment, wavered in his resolve to have Robert, and no one but Robert, for his son-in-law. But Robert could not believe this, and he suffered accordingly; though neither by word or look had he revealed his anguish. He had a feeling that to give voice to his fears might give reality; he was almost angrily resolved to see no change in Thyra, to hear no change in her voice, to put from him, as nonsensical, anything like coolness in her manner. It was an article not only of faith in his heart, but of confidence in his existence, that Thyra could not, would not, break the unspoken contract between them; it was as inviolable and certain as life and death.

Paul Varrick warmly countenanced Robert in this position; and the sorrow and fear he had frequently seen of late in his eyes, when Thyra was with Hector, touched him to the quick, for he had encouraged Robert from the first and had privately promised him his daughter. Besides which, he was tenacious beyond expression of his word, or of any promise or obligation in which his word stood for a fact. He knew, also, that he could die comfortably if Thyra was Robert's wife; he was not at all sure he could live comfortably if she was the wife of Hector.

One evening growing toward the herring fishing, Paul walked down to the pier, hoping to see Robert.

He found him on the *Meum and Tuum*, busy at work among the nets, which were likely to be needed at any hour. Paul's heart smote him. Hector had been much with Thyra of late, and the lifted face of Robert was full of anxious sadness. He nodded and smiled faintly, but went on sorting the nets without a word.

So Paul laid his arm across his shoulder and said:

"Art thou unhappy? What is there on thy mind? Does it not go well between us?"

Then Robert gave words to his trouble. "I thought," he said, "that thou of all mortal men wouldst deal fairly with me."

"I will stand by thee while life lasts, Robert."

"I thought thou wert willing I should wed Thyra, but now, the rumor goes abroad that thou wilt give her to this stranger Scot. It is not like the rest of thy dealings with me."

"Dost thou think, Robert Thorson, that Paul Varrick will ever tread his word under his feet? Not one letter of what I have promised thee will I call back."

"Thy cousin Maran told me that the match is determined, and that it was a great match, and to thy contentment."

"Maran's tongue seldom finds a true tale. That talk is like the rest of her lying. I have said I would give Thyra to thee for thy wife, and, by Saint Magnus! I will do it."

"Thy word is good enough, and great enough,

without Saint Magnus to bind it. We are Christian men, and our 'yes' and 'no' is our oath."

"Be it so, Robert, thou art a good man, and will it please thee to marry Thyra?"

"Paul, thou knowest well, that all my life's joy is folded up in that day. But let Thyra say the word; that is her right."

"I will tell her to do so this night. It is time she settled herself, and put a stop to envious tongues. As it is, every woman has something to say about it, and I like not such lying words thrown about. I wish only that the talkers were men; then those who spoke of Thyra wrongfully should smart for it. Come, now, let us speak of our affairs. Hast thou hired all the men for the fishing that we need?"

"Save two. Dick Brough has asked for a place, but he is one of the worst of men."

"I like him not. He is sulky and quarrelsome. We shall not be the better for him."

"Donald Groat was here."

"There is not a pin to choose between Brough and Groat. With them on the boat there would always be some quarrel to ward off, or to fight out. Groat also is an unlucky man; from the first he is unlucky. Fore-speak others. Wilt thou see to it?"

"I am ready to do so."

"Then I will go home, and I will say my mind to Thyra this hour, and the upshot of our talk I will tell thee in the morning."

“And I pray thee be not hard with her. A few stiff words from thee may shut every door of her heart against me. I could not bear to lose all hope. Oh, Paul, I know not what is best—to urge, or to wait.”

“Thou knowest the saying of old about faint hearts and fair women. Fear not; I tell thee, on mine honor, thou shalt have Thyra to wife.”

But who is strong enough to struggle against decided things? That night as soon as Paul went out, Thyra began to prepare herself for a visit to her cousin. But as soon as she did so a strange lassitude, a sudden indifference to the visit, came over her. She could not dress her hair; it was up and down with it, until her arms were tired and her head ached; and even then she was dissatisfied with results. She could not find her belt; Asta had not cleaned her shoes; there was a rent in her gown, and the right colored thread to mend it had disappeared. She felt as if her hands were crossed—she was dressing as we do in troublous dreams, when the Fates are undressing us as fast as we proceed. At length, with some temper, she took out her comb and said crossly, “Very well, then, do without it!” and so let her fair hair fall into the freedom it was apparently determined to have. Then she put back in their places the garments she could not manage, and in her simplest gown went to the open door of the house, and sat down on the topmost step.

“Why should I trouble myself for Maran?” she thought. “Let her get news from somebody else to-night. Last night I dressed myself and Hector was not there; he has got over the sea fever, and nothing but the fishing pleases him. Well, then, let him go to the boats, I will not run after him; he thinks himself above all other men in the Islands, so it seems to me. I will stay at home. My heart tells me this is the best way.”

She sat still in the place she had chosen. There was no work, no book, in her hand, and she did not think of such a thing as knitting or reading. Her eyes were fixed upon some boats lying far out on the horizon, and she wondered in which one Hector was singing and telling stories, and making all the men wonder, and smile at his cleverness. He had become a great favorite with these silent Norse fishermen; for he paid his way generously into their boats, and was as good at work as he was clever and amusing in words. While they lay on the decks waiting for the fish to fill their nets, he would stir their hearts with tales of Fingal, or the songs of Ossian, but as soon as work was to be done, he would break a word in the middle, be on his feet, and ready to help in a moment.

Thyra was intensely proud of his influence and intensely jealous of the men over whom it was exercised. During the few weeks which had elapsed since Hector's arrival, their intimacy had become very

near and lover-like; and all the more dangerous because it was so carefully hid from Thyra's father. Hector was determined to win Thyra, but also determined to avoid the powerful obstacle of Paul's opposition. So he wooed the girl in all those sweet ways which love teaches; he wooed her thus even in Paul Varrick's house and presence, finding many delightful opportunities, which by their very secrecy and reticence had that power, inscrutable and deep-reaching, which more candid and open endearments would have lacked.

She was deeply in love, but as yet did not herself know how deeply. A restless longing to be ever in Hector's presence consumed her; yet when they were together she was generally ill at ease, and half-resentful of his control. And, oh! when he was absent for a whole day, the world was void, and life desolate, and not to be borne! At such times she had begun to say to herself, "I am either in love or bereft of my wits; and Maran says he is going away in the summer! Then I shall also go away, but it will be to the kirk-yard; I know that things have come to this pass with me. But what is in my heart must be quiet. Oh, Hector! Hector!"

It was this intense secret love, and the thoughts it bred, that brought her to the hour and the place where Love and Sorrow were waiting for her. In that still, strange, heavenly twilight, sifted through with auroras, as she sat motionless, thinking, dreaming, long-

ing, she suddenly heard someone coming. She stood up to listen. It was Hector! It was Hector! The Inner Woman told her at once, and she regarded the omen—told her with a hopelessness that was almost terror. For in the midst of her joy, tears sprang to her eyes; she trembled, she was as cold as death, premonitory grief and fear were in her soul; but she asked neither question nor advice from this august friend. Her heart throbbed wildly to the music of the approaching footsteps, and when Hector came close to her, he saw in her face and in her attitude that the hour so ardently desired had come.

For, erect as she stood before him, there was an undoubted, though invisible, humility in her appearance. It was not in her unbound hair, or her dropped arms, or her timid greeting; it was her apprehending inner self that confessed resistance to Fate no longer possible. Thyra was unconscious of this spiritual defeat, this withdrawal, as it were, of her good angel; but Hector felt that all opposition had been removed; he did not ask how. His love instantly grew impetuous, and more imperative, as he joyfully understood that Thyra's heart was ready to surrender to his summons. Without question or permission he seated her at his side, and then gazed with rapture at her loveliness.

"Oh, beautiful Thyra! Oh, lovely Thyra! Oh, darling! darling! I love you! I love you! I love you!"

Softer, and lower, grew every word of this pas-

sionate declaration; and his arm was around her waist when he whispered the last word; and Thyra had a joy past believing—a joy wonderful, immeasurable, transporting! But with a strange contradiction she remained silent and apparently unmoved. He took her hands, he blessed her beauty, he wooed her with all those flaming, persuasive words the Gael can always bring from his heart to his lips. Not one of them fell to the ground. They burned in her heart, they leaped to her eyes, they loosened her tongue, and she lifted the full splendor of her face to his, and looked straight into his eyes.

“Dear one!” she said, “the Good Being knows that I love thee!”

Then his soul sprang to her, and he kissed her from hands to mouth, and called her, “His wife! His sweet wife!” until his words grew faint with joy, and were broken on her lips with kisses, and then ceased in that divine silence that, falling between lovers, is the surest and sweetest of revealers. For in love it is thus—a look and a kiss—and all has been said. Oh, how wonderful is this mere fact of loving!

In this transporting hour they thought only of themselves. They forgot her father; Hector forgot Sara; and the New Love, glorying in its success, cast not one look behind to where the Old Love waited vainly for some token of faithfulness. Infolded by each other’s arms, their happy faces beaming with smiles of youthful felicity, shadeless, cloudless, sad-

dened by no yesterdays and fearing no to-morrows. This halcyon trance, this truce of sorrowful life, was interrupted by the harsh, melancholy voice of Paul Varrick singing:

“ ‘ Oh, the Sea! the Sea!
A cruel Mistress she.
Her winds are full of moans,
Her deeps of dead men's bones.
Oh, the Sea! the Sea!’ ”

Thyra started up in the greatest alarm. “ Now, Hector, thou must go!” she said; “ indeed thou must.”

“ But I want to see the Captain. I must tell him.”

“ No, no, no! Thou must not say a word. Little thou knowest what sorrow it may bring to us. And to-night I beg thee to go away, to make haste—when my father is at singing point, he is masterful to talk to. Thou wilt not be able to manage him. Hector, I pray thee go quickly! It is the best way!”

Her eager, trembling voice, her anxious face, her urgent manner, were an imperative command. And Hector was not averse to put off a conversation whose satisfaction was, at least, doubtful. Indeed, his very appearance in that hour, triumphantly joyous and confident, would have provoked Paul. Thyra knew this, so with entreaties and embraces he kissed her, and slipped quietly away among the coast cliffs to Maran's house. But in that hour all roads were heavenly roads to Hector. The cliffs, and the ocean, the

lonely land under the glorious sky, the sleeping town, the dreamlike ships on the horizon—all these things seemed but part and parcel of his love and his felicity. For there is a mystical communion of touch between man and nature; and the earth and the sea, and the heavens reflected in a thousand ways, the happiness Hector knew not how to express.

Paul came slowly homeward, singing and talking to himself; and Thyra had time to call up all the strength that joy had scattered. She resumed her seat on the step and, leaning her head against the lintel of the door, greeted her father with the air and manner of one weary with watching for him.

“I am later than my custom, Thyra,” he said at once; “but as I was coming home I met Captain Yell, and for three years he has been away on the whaling grounds. Hast thou been alone?”

“I did not go to Maran’s; I could not dress myself; I think the fairies were in my clothes—I was weary for thee.”

“Good girl! To-night was a night by itself. It was Yell’s night. Everyone was right glad to see him—a brisk brave man, well to do, a proper man in all things. In that he is like Robert. Wait a moment, I want to speak to thee.”

“Father, I am sleepy.”

“Put out the candle, and listen to what I say. I am not minded to let thee sleep, or to sleep myself, till I have said the words I promised to say. This night

Robert Thorson asked me to give thee to him for his wife."

"There is no need that I should tell thee, father, Norse women give themselves away."

"With the consent of their parents; that is the first step with a good girl."

"Robert has never the said the word 'wife' to me. Let him speak for himself; that is only right."

"He will speak fast enough. He knows, now, that he may do so. I have said thou shalt marry him, and so it shall be. I mean it."

"I will not marry anyone just yet. Art thou tired of me? Never did I hear of a father bargaining away his daughter."

"I gave thee to a good man."

"And what did he give thee for the gift?"

"Thou'rt a temper-trying woman. Listen to what I say. I have heard much ill report of thy doings lately."

"Why didst thou not strike those who spoke ill of me? Because I am beautiful they hate and defame me, and thou wert not quick to defend me. I am much to be pitied."

"Well, then, if thou are to be pitied and defended, Robert Thorson is the man who can do it. When thou art married to him thou wilt not have me to jeer at."

"I am sorry I spoke those words; but when I hear thee saying 'Get married, get married,' I am down-

cast about it; so I do not say wise words. I am sorry to grieve thee."

"As for me, I forgive, for I love thee. But I have made up my mind about Robert. I have good ground to stand on in this matter, and I will not move an inch. Robert will speak to thee."

"Why should he? If thou hast given me away why should he speak? Thou hast made me in his eyes a thing, not a woman. Very well, if I marry him I will teach him that I am not a woman. Yes, I will do nothing to his pleasure."

"Thou wilt make a town's talk of thyself. I know well the secret of thy disobedience. It is Hector MacDonald. Do not think he will ever mate with thee. That is as likely as that the eagle and the gray gull should nest together. Moreover, Bor Black says that one told him MacDonald was already betrothed to a Highland chief's daughter."

"And that is a lie."

"How canst thou tell?"

"Now I see that he also has thy ill-will."

"I trouble not myself about him. He is good company for me, but not for thee, and I may as well say now what I shall say later: it is time thou broke off going about with him. He is full of talk about princes and ladies; and to be short on this matter, many people have told my very self, to my face, that he makes love to thee. Is that a lie?"

"And what didst thou say to that?"

"I said what I said."

"Well?"

"I said neither more nor less than I would rather see thee dead than the wife of Hector MacDonald. I said moreover thou wert promised to Robert Thorson. Pass thy word that thou wilt marry no one else."

"No, I will not do that. I will be free as thou art. Do I trouble thee about marrying? Yet many a time I have heard this and that about Vesta Skade, Norna Vedder, and my cousin Maran."

"Wilt thou keep thy tongue in bridle? My marrying or not marrying is quite another affair. Thou art to marry Robert, and that before winter comes again. Do not set about to thwart my plans, for I am able to bring this thing to pass. I have given it out that thou wilt marry Robert Thorson, and I will take no other thing in hand till it be done."

"Thou hast taken in hand a thing greater than thou can manage—without my will go with thine."

"I will do the thing I have said; if thou thwart me it will be worse for thee than thou dreamest."

"If thou threaten me I will do nothing; I will do nothing at all."

"It is thy bounden duty to obey me."

"Did not I tell thee I am bound to no man? I am as free as Magnus Varrick, who came here first of all the Varricks, because he would not be bound to obey even King Hacon."

“What is the use of talking; thou wilt be the wife of Robert Thorson. I will make that come to pass.”

“Then thou wilt do something worth talking about. I am aching with sleep and the trouble thou hast laid on me; and I will go now.”

“Go then, but for the time to come I will put little trust in thee. And why wilt thou strive against what is to be? It is sure to happen.”

“The future will put that to the proof. I think thou hast forgotten how to love me! That Scot with whom thou now spendest thy days has weaned thee from me. Before he came thou wert ever kind to Thyra; now thy good words are all for him. When wilt thou send him away? Or is he to take my place in thy heart? Yes, I have heard that he is thy own son; many have told me so, and that is the wherefore thou art ready to give me away to Robert Thorson. It is such a shame to me! I cannot show my face to my friends; thou art cruel, cruel, and my heart is like to break,” and she threw herself on the sofa and sobbed aloud.

And then that happened that always happens in such cases. Paul humbled himself before his lovely weeping child, and said:

“I love thee! I do love thee, and that beyond all others. I have no child but thee; those who say I have I will reckon with. I seek only thy happiness—thy mother in heaven, she knows that. Thyra! Thyra!

Cease weeping. Wilt thou cease now, at once? Thy tears blister my heart."

"Thou dost love me, father?"

"As my life."

"Thou wilt always love me?"

"I swear it. Not while my life days last will I cease to love thee. I lay this vow in the hands of God."

At these words she rose, put her arms around his neck and kissed him, and then they parted. She thought she had conquered. But as Paul undressed that night, he muttered to himself:

"My heart tells me what she would not tell me. Where there is smoke there is fire. Lovely and dear is Thyra Varrick, but also she is a woman, and therefore a Daughter of Concealment."

CHAPTER IV

Love Is Love Forever More

THE reconciliation was not as complete as it appeared to be. Thyra had been neither frank nor confidential, and Paul felt it. The morning light brought a revelation of this fact he could not reason away; and he was glum and unhappy in consequence.

“She has sailed all around me again,” he muttered, as he made the knot in his neckerchief; “sailed all around me. She put me in the wrong, when I was in the right; she made me make promises instead of making them herself. I may be a match for winds and waves, and rough men and whales, and polar bears, but I am a simpleton on a waterlogged ship, in the hands of a woman—of a child not nineteen years old yet. I will see if Robert Thorson can do any better; he ought to have looked after the girl before this. Little time I lost when I wanted Thyra’s mother. I told her I wanted her, and I would not take ‘no’ from her. And I shall tell Robert, if he does not pluck up his courage soon, that Scot will carry off Thyra in his very sight. I wonder if she believed he was her half-brother! Nonsense, she did

not! It was only another of her tricks—very clever in the little witch, but I will outsail her yet.” And something within him answered scornfully “Perhaps!” but he did not voice the doubt.

Such thoughts naturally made him silent at his breakfast, but Thyra was unusually merry and affectionate. She had taken pains to look lovely; and she had gathered from Asta and Elga in the kitchen the gossip of the town—“There was a whale in the shallow water by Copinsay,” she said; “and two strange ships had been seen off Stromness.” She even asked Paul if he would take a message to Robert for her, but Paul, like the majority of men, grew cross as the woman coaxing him grew kind; and he answered with indifference:

“Take thy own love messages. Thou hast treated Robert as badly as can be, but I’ll be bound thou wilt beguile him as easy as if he was about four years old.”

“Father!”

“To be sure. Thou art much the same as all other women.”

“Why are men so fain and ready to marry, if women are so ill-made?”

“Good or bad, wives must be had; bad, most of them, full of faults. But I have something better than women to think about, if the whale at Copinsay is not another bit of trickery; but like enough that tale was bred and born in my own kitchen.”

"Thy tongue should not be a sword, father. I have tried to speak to thee kindly, and thou wouldst not be kind. Some day thou wilt remember—and be sorry for it."

"Thou art always chattering. There is no good in all that we have said. Fate rules in this thing, I see."

He spoke no more, and went out with an air of sadness that made Thyra very unhappy. After her selfish fashion she loved her father; and, also, his reticence troubled her. He was generally so ready to say what he wished and what he expected, and what he was resolved to have and to do. If, then, he should now begin to keep his own counsel, how could she order her life so as to avoid open disobedience and open disputing?

Paul found Robert on the *Meum and Twum*, which was ready to sail. The report of the stranded whale was true, and he had just sent the news to Paul's house, being sure he would desire to join in the capture.

"That is true," said Paul when Robert had explained the matter; "I will surely go to Copinsay, but thou hast other fishing to do. I have had a talk with Thyra; now it is thy turn. She is expecting thee, and delays in love are not fortunate."

"Thou givest me the best of good news," said Robert, flushing scarlet with pleasure, as he lifted his coat and leaped to the pier. And Paul laughed

within himself, a laugh not devoid of irony, for he saw that Paul Varrick had instantly become a person of no importance, and that Robert took no further interest in the whale, or the boat, or indeed in anything concerning the matter in hand.

“He will walk a little slower, and hold his head a little lower, in an hour or two,” he thought. “For whether Thyra takes his love or not, she will make him feel in some of her queer ways that he has been grievously in the wrong, or else forwardsome beyond measure. He will be either in a kind of shamefaced heaven, or down in the depths of the sea, when I see him next. What fools men are! Here is a big whale to harpoon and bring to shore, and Robert leaves the fun and profit to beg a girl’s kiss and a promise. Love is a great mystery!” And then after a thoughtful pause, “After all, it may be the mystery that makes life worth having.”

Thyra was expecting Robert. If he had spoken to her father on the previous night, he was sure to follow her father’s acceptance of his suit by an immediate appeal to herself. Probably this thought and expectation was accountable for the pains she had taken with her toilet; for never is a woman more desirous to look her best than when she is going to refuse herself to her lover. Robert found her leaning over the wall that divided the yard of Paul’s house from the edge of the cliffs, and the breaking waves below them. She turned with a smile as he

greeted her, and pointed out the gulls feeding on the bread and fish she had just cast to them, talking and laughing merrily as she did so.

He was disturbed by her exuberant spirits, and found it hard to say the words burning his tongue. But his love was too great to be silenced by such delusive mirth as Thyra was indulging; and the invincible truth of his atmosphere quickly dashed the mockery of her affected mood. He could not answer its insincerity, and she soon became quieter and turned toward the house, talking of her father and the whale, but aware through all her words of Robert's absolute indifference to them. For the man's heart was so full of love that all other subjects passed him like the wind; and she understood that he was no longer to be put off. She had come to the answering of questions, and she accepted the situation.

Therefore, as they crossed the yard together Thyra looked well at her lover. "He is very much of a man," she thought, "and until I am married to Hector, I will not let him go. Little knows a woman what friends she will need; and no friend better than an old lover." In fact she was resolved on a policy of procrastination, tempered by that sweet coercion which throws itself upon the forbearance and affection it intends to use for its own advantage.

When they entered the house she made him sit down, took his cap from his head, and brought him a glass of blanda. Her face had become kind and

serious; and her smile, as she offered him the drink, was delightful. He drew her to his side, and tried to speak, but could not find the words he had been preparing all night long. And Thyra saw his difficulty, and began the conversation for him, in a manner so direct that it opened the gates of speech at once.

"Robert," she said, "my father told me thou wouldst be here; so then I have not gone to Maran's as I intended. He said thou hadst something to tell me. Is it about thy cousin Barbara? That news is late; I know already that she is to be married at the Feast."

"I am not thinking of Barbara. I am thinking of nothing but thee; and I have only one thing to tell thee, though I may tell it to all eternity. It is that—I love thee! I can say no more, and no less, if I speak forever."

"Well, then, I have known this; ever since I was as high as thy knee, I have known thou lovedst me. I am not blind to true love. Always thou hast been kind as Heaven to me."

"Dost thou, then, love me?"

"How could I help loving thee? If I did not love thee, I would scorn the best of friends, for I put thee next to my father."

"That is what thy father told me, or I had feared to say the words I came to say. Wilt thou be my wife?"

"Now thou art going too fast. A girl wants her girlhood. I am too young to marry. Why wilt thou torment me?"

"Thy father says——"

"Yes, I know. It is a shame for him! I think he wants to go sailing again; and so he would be rid of the charge of me. It makes me hide my face from all the women in the town. 'Paul Varrick is egging on Robert Thorson to marry his daughter,' that is what many say; and others go further and vow 'Paul Varrick is trying to make the young MacDonald marry her.' Robert, it is not fair! It is very cruel! And thou! thou! to crown all; thou of all men, to back up these gossips! I cannot bear it!"

"My love! My love! What dost thou wish me to do?"

"I will tell thee. When my father speaks to thee again, say to him, Thyra is not ready to name her wedding day. I wish not that she should be put under force to be my wife. When she is willing, that is my time. Say these words, wilt thou, neither more nor less, and stick to them? Am I not reasonable?"

"I cannot deny thee."

"I am weary to death of people saying, Thyra is to be married to this man, and that man; on this day, and that day; for this reason, and that reason; but always the beginning and the tag end of every talk is, Thyra is to be married. Say thou to such gossips, 'None of you know the truth.' I wish that they

would talk of their own weddings; they have talked me out of all love for mine."

"But thou wilt think of it anon?"

"Anon, and anon, if I am let alone. Did thou hear that my father, also, is to be married?"

"That story is beyond likelihood. I give it a deaf ear always."

"I know not, Robert. Why, then, is my father so anxious to give me to thy care? It makes me hot with shame. Cannot thou feel how I must feel?"

"Yes, I can. And, oh, thou dear thing! It will go ill with those who talk of thee, and thy affairs, where I can hear them."

Then she began to cry softly, and to cover her face with her hands; and Robert comforted her, and said she was altogether right, and only modest as a maid should be; and he vowed on her hands lying in his hands, that he would "live waiting for her word, and suffer no one to make her miserable in his name, or for his pleasure."

And he looked so manly and tender in his self-sacrifice that her heart smote her. For to Robert her distress was very real, and it seemed an incredible cruelty to him that for anything she should be made to weep. Her lovely, piteous face, her dropped eyes, her air of humiliation, bred anger against himself, as well as against all others who could wound by word or deed a creature so beautiful and helpless.

He would not distress her by any further pleading of his own cause; but, lifting her hands, kissed them, and went away so softly, that Thyra did not know he had left her, until she opened her eyes to see if he was present or not. And when she perceived that she was alone she was strangely unhappy. The somber, piteous power of his silent, patient acceptance of her uncertain affection and dubious promise affected her as no reproaches could have done.

"He is a good man," she said, weeping a little more, and going to the yard to watch his slow, dolorous footsteps as they took him from love and hope to the lonely places of suspense and accepted sacrifice. For who, in the first moments of such bitter disappointment, can lift up the heart and sing cheerfully the Hymn of Renunciation?

Yet in spite of her little compunctions she could not resist the feminine instinct of cruelty in her heart. She called him back in a voice so clear and sweet that he could not shut his ears to her invitation. Hesitating, with hope striving against doubt, he went back to where she stood bending over the stone wall, a vision of youth and perfect beauty, and apparent affection.

"Robert," she said, avoiding the look of speechless inquiry in his sad eyes, "Robert, I have something to ask of thee. It is that thou wilt stand up for me, and for my good name, against all who slander me, men or women."

"I will do that. Was it for this only thou called me?"

"There is another thing, I fear so much my father's anger. Thou knowest when he is angry he is beyond all reason, and then I am afraid to be near him. Let him not blame me, Robert, for anything."

"If there is blame, it is mine, and I will answer it."

"Say nothing to him about Thyra that he can pick a quarrel on. Wilt thou do this for me?"

"I have promised. It is but a little thing. Is this all of thy wish?"

"I am afraid of father—and of evil tongues."

"Fear not. I am between thee and all that can give thee trouble. Is this all? quite all?"

"One thing more; I would not like thee to be angry with me."

"My heart is so full of love for thee there is not room in it for one angry thought."

"And wilt thou remember me—always?"

"I could no more forget thee than forget to draw the breath of life. Is this all?" and he looked at her with eyes so full of wistful inquiry that she could only shake her head and turn away.

Then he hurried to his lodging, and shut out the light, and bolted the door, and threw himself on his bed in despair. For he knew that in some measure Thyra was deceiving him. His truthful soul felt the insincerity and evasion of her words. It was as if she had put a dagger of distrust up to the very hilt

in his heart. He was bleeding inwardly. But after an hour of such misery, he found the solace of tears, and he wept blindly, passionately, with great sobs and utter abandon, hiding his face and burying his voice in his pillow, so that none but God might know. And he was not long uncomforted, for it is just such tears God wipes with His own hand away.

In the meantime Thyra had dressed herself and gone to Maran's. She had the disappointment she deserved. Maran told her that Paul had come himself for Hector, and had so insisted on his going to the whale-hunt that the young man found no way to escape his invitation.

"Your father, as is well known, wants every man's will, as well as his own; and after more clash and clavers than I had patience to listen to, MacDonald had to go with him. For, as I said, the prime and notable quality in Paul Varrick is, that people be to do his pleasure whether they want to, or not."

"I am sure Hector did not want to go."

"And I am sure he was not much averse to seeing the ploy. At the long last he went off very gay-hearted, and he asked me to give you this bit of a letter. I am not sure, Thyra, if I ought to give you it."

"It is mine. You ought to give me what is mine."

"There is your father; and he is a contrary, hard-hearted creature as ever drew the breath of life. I

think I will give you the paper, for I am not sorry to be against such a mortal tyrant as he is."

"It is mine, anyway," said Thyra, taking the letter; and then there was silence, for the girl was troubled and angry, and not inclined at that moment to confidence. Her attitude was indeed provoking, and not for long did Maran endure it. She had too good a card to play to wait for opportunity.

"Thyra," she said, "there is no use in being double with a woman like me. I have had experience, and I knew as quick as I set eyes on MacDonald last night that something beyond ordinary had happened. The change in him was not to be told, and I thought, maybe, Prince Charles had landed, or the like of that; and so I asked him plain out, and he answered, far better than Prince Charles had come to him. And after a few more questions—for I am a curious creature—he could keep the secret no longer. He said he was in love with the most beautiful woman in the world, and then he clapped his two hands and went on: 'The wonderful thing is that she loves me! I am going to marry her! It is Thyra Varrick!' And so out with all, name and surname, till I could scarce keep my composure. I had to tell him to speak lower, or the servant lass in the kitchen would be keckling over the news, and then away to the town cross with it."

"It was very presuming of him making me a common talk between you. I came this morning to tell

you the news myself, and then I find you know everything."

"Like as not, I do. We got on a very easy footing together; I know everything, all the outs and ins of the matter, so there is no use holding things back from me, Thyra."

"Well, Maran, nothing is settled. And what we are to do with father is more than I can tell. And to be very true, I am frightened this morning. There is sure to be quarreling and trouble about such a marriage, and no one knows what comes of it. A girl should look before she leaps."

"You will look before you leap far. You are a prudent body, maybe it is well, for MacDonald is a mortal idiot, for love's sake. I like it in him. He gave me a silver thistle, and a Cairngorm brooch, and he made promises—I'm not minding them. I think it pleasure and pay both to be on the side of true love."

"Yet you are always setting me against Robert Thorson, and there is no love truer than his."

"Robert is a presumptuous creature. The like of him casting his thoughts on you! A sailor and a fisherman, when you may come to be Lady MacDonald. Take off your bonnet and mantilla. Your father will not be back for three days, and he has your lad with him, safe and sure."

"Father thinks he has done a very clever thing—we shall see. Now we are pulling at opposite ends of

a rope, and he thinks he is the strongest; but if you and Hector are with me, it will be three against one."

"Three against one, and so you may bring your marriage to a head like a wish. I will stand by you for the love of it; and I'll go against your father and Robert Thorson for the love of it."

Then they sat down to talk the affair to the bottom, and Maran was as happy as she could be. The Evil One has always plenty of arguments to prove that wrong is right; and two women helping one another to understand them soon make out a clear case for their own desires. So the three days, in spite of a drizzling rain that kept them in the house, went very quickly away; and if Paul Varrick would only play the part his daughter and cousin laid out for him to play, there was not likely to be any difficulty in carrying out the most splendid marriage ceremony Kirkwall had ever seen.

Unfortunately Paul was not so easily disposed of; indeed, he was simply a quite unaccountable man. No one, for instance, had anticipated his device of carrying off Hector in order to clear the ground for Robert Thorson. As soon as the *Meum and Tuum* came into the harbor, Robert was on hand to meet his partner; and in the moment of meeting, Paul saw that all was not as he wished. As soon as circumstances permitted, he opened the subject without any preface.

"Where is Thyra?" he asked.

"She is at Maran Flett's. When thou art away she is best there."

"Go and tell her that I am back and bring her with thee, wilt thou?"

"Thou knowest that Maran hates me. I have no heart to go to her house, but I will send word to Thyra."

"Hast thou spoken to Thyra, or hast thou not?"

"I have spoken. It is all right."

"She has named the wedding-day?"

"Not yet. She has a maiden's hesitation. I like it in her."

"I like it not. Such shilly-shally wooing! I never saw nor heard tell of a lover so easily put off, and——"

"I am satisfied. Thyra behaved to me more kindly than I hoped. She is not to be blamed nor shamed, or scolded on this question. I will not have her made to weep for me. That is all about it."

Paul looked as if he did not comprehend, but after a moment's reflection he laughed and said, with a grim attempt at a joke, "I think, then, it is Paul Varrick who must set the wedding-day." Robert did not answer; there was no joking on this subject for him, and he let it drop without further notice.

"Where is Thyra?" he asked.

CHAPTER V

Paul Varrick Proposes; Thyra Varrick Disposes

BUT the idea having entered Paul's mind took root there in more than one form; and as Thyra was not present to talk to him, he pondered it as he ate his lonely meal. For several little circumstances delayed the boy Robert sent to Maran Flett's with the news of Paul's return; and it was mid-afternoon before Thyra knew her father was back from Copinsay. By this time Paul Varrick had made for himself an extraordinary resolution—he had resolved to go to the Minister for advice. Never before had he done such a thing. He had been used to say that “Minister's counsel was unlucky counsel”; but he considered in this case, that it was counsel about a woman, and not about business or boats. He went to the manse with that little bravado in his carriage which men assume when they suspect the thing they do will cause social wonder or comment, and are yet resolved to assert their freedom in the matter. The Minister was walking in his garden, and when Paul lifted the latch of the gate, he looked at him with a pleased surprise, and said heartily:—

“Come in, Captain Varrick; come in, and welcome. I heard thou wert gone to Copinsay.”

"I was there, Dominie," he answered, "and am safe home, thank the Almighty! If thou art willing, I would like to speak to thee."

"Thou mayst speak freely with me, Captain. My complaint is thou speakest seldom to me."

"I will do better, Dominie. In the thick of the fight, the other day, I lost my footing, and but for Bele Peterson I had never got it again. I wish to give thee ten pounds for the poor, as a thank-offering;" and he laid the gold upon the table.

"That is well, Captain, but thou must understand it is not the gift, but the heart behind the gift, which Heaven accepts; it is the obedience, the love, the gratitude, that makes thee give the gold, that is pleasant in God's sight. What does He care for the gold? The earth is His, and the fullness thereof. But He does care that Paul Varrick is grateful for his saved life, and that he not only praises Him with his heart and lips, but permits his hand to praise Him with a gift. And now it is time for me to say once more, let thy feet tread the way to His house more frequently. Seldom do I see thee in the kirk."

"I will do better; I will come next Sunday; other Sundays, too, when I can. I have reached a time in life when I find my own wisdom not enough. Be kind to me and tell me what is to be done."

"What about, Paul?"

"It is my daughter."

"I thought so. She has been too much talked of

lately. I have heard the talk. It is not good. Yet I believe no wrong of Thyra Varrick."

"There is no wrong—none at all. But I want to put a stop to the talk, for that is wrong. Now Robert Thorson loves her as his own soul. Thou knows Robert?"

"I know no better man."

"That is the truth. He is good. Thyra was willing to be his wife till this young Scot, Hector MacDonald, came to see me."

"And what came he for?"

"He came on business for one we do not name."

"Yet I will name him; he came for Charles Stuart!"

"Yes. He wanted my ship for the bringing over of arms and troops."

"Thou wilt not surely be so wicked? Once before thou ventured this man. I told thee then, nothing good would come of such business. Did good come of it?"

"Nothing but loss and evil came of it."

"Perhaps thou hast not done with the evil. Hadst thou not meddled with this Charles Stuart, thou hadst not lost thy ship, and this MacDonald had not come to put in danger thy daughter. Varrick! Varrick! Start an evil deed, and no man can tell where it will end, or whom it will injure on its way. Wilt thou be led astray a second time in this respect?"

"I have no such thought."

"Then tell the young man so, and send him away."

"I have told him with the straightest, strongest words I own, that I will not help him in any way whatever."

"What then, does he stay here for?"

"He says that after the fishing is over he can raise five hundred men for the Stuart."

"He cannot raise five; and he is not such a fool as to hold this hope. Our men have spoken plain out of him. I know this. It is not for Prince Charles he stays; it is for Thyra Varrick."

"That is what I think. So then, I want Thyra married to Robert Thorson. It is for her salvation. Help me in this matter. I am sure thou wilt."

"What am I to do for thee?"

"Thyra is shy, and will not bind herself to Robert; and Robert is too careful of her fancies, and will not urge, lest he offend her. So then, between her I will and I won't, and Robert's fear of making her angry with him, this Scot has all the opportunity he wants."

"Now tell me why the Scot is not a proper husband for Thyra?"

"He is a Scot—that is one thing, and it means many things. He is a gentleman—nobleman if you please—and Thyra is a sailor's daughter. He has more learning than I can tell thee, and Thyra is not a scholar, so he will soon despise her. He is a soldier, and Thyra has been with sailormen and fishermen all her life. He is from the mountains, and Thyra will

be as wretched as a lapwing in a cage; if she lives not near the sea; I have vowed that Thyra shall not marry him, if by any mortal means I can help it. I say by any means, I care not what they are."

"Now I understand. How am I to help thee?"

"Next Tuesday is my birthday, and I will ask my friends, men and women, to eat supper with me. And when the pleasure is at the highest, I will ask all present to drink health and happiness to my daughter and Robert Thorson, naming them together, and there will be good wishes, and so on. And everybody present will understand the betrothal. And thou! Thou wilt make it thus, and rise and bless them. And after that there may come a good moment to call on them to name the wedding-day and bid the company present to the bridal and the bridal feast. Then also, MacDonald will see that he is wasting time to stay here longer, and it will be a good day for Thyra when he sails away. Am I right? Or am I wrong? I ask thee."

"I am sure thou art right. And I am with thee."

"I thought I could trust thee. And I will do all after thy advice in this matter of my daughter. Also, I will behave better for the future."

"Thou couldst be such a brave helper in all good works, Paul; turn now into the right way, my brother."

Paul was much affected; his eyes grew dim, but he was likewise much pleased. "I am not worthy."

he answered, "but I will surely try to do better. And thou wilt be sure to come next Tuesday night?"

"I will come. And I do not think Thyra will dare to go against such a public avowal. No! no! The girl does not live who would do such a thing."

Paul knew the Dominie spoke truth. No girl could bear to live in such isolation and reproach as Thyra would suffer, if she publicly allowed her betrothal and then gave the lie to her father and lover, and the slight to her friends, which such a course implied. He felt as he walked homeward that he had taken a step so far ahead of Thyra that she would be compelled to order hers as he directed. Yet he was sorry for his girl. He knew her love of freedom from the domineering love of it in his own heart; and he did not forget that Thyra's mother had played fast and loose with his own love, much longer than he approved.

"It is a kind of right that women have," he admitted; and then he unreasonably turned all his annoyance on Robert. "Such a wooer!" he ejaculated contemptuously; "he ought to know that women like to be made to do the thing they want to do. Robert is not half masterful enough; Thyra wants a master." Then he stopped his mental dictation, for he suddenly remembered that he himself had often signally failed in making Thyra feel that she had a master. So he began to whistle and then to wonder that no one was at the door to watch his coming. For Thyra

was busy with her own thoughts and did not hear his footsteps till he was on the threshold. She was kneeling before the fire toasting a bannock for him, and she turned with a face so bright and smiling that he forgot everything in his pleasure at her pleasure.

"I heard thou wert safe home, father, and I am making tea for thee. I knew thou wouldst want a cup. And so glad as I am to see thee! I have been at Maran's, and she is not thee; and her house is not thy house. There is a difference; oh, yes!"

And as she stood smiling at him, so tall and slender, so lovely and loving, he did not wonder at Robert's fear of her. He was bound to acknowledge within himself a reverential admiration for beauty so great, and so bewitchingly enhanced by the little air of authority which Thyra quite unconsciously expressed. It was an air she did not assume; as Paul said, "she was heritage born to it." It was the gift of her race, and of centuries of womanhood dominant in affairs.

Then they sat down to drink their tea, and Paul said his bannock of barley meal, his kippered herring, and fine hot tea made a meal fit for a king; and Thyra gave him a smile which made it so. And then he told her all about the whale hunt, and also of his own momentary danger.

"It was a God's mercy I was saved," he said; "and I have been to see the Dominie, and left a thank-offering with him; and I will tell thee what I think, Thyra. It is my birthday next Tuesday, and I am

in the mind to ask the chief of my friends to sup with me. The Dominie has promised to come; and what is thy wish about it?" "Whatever is thy wish, father, is mine. There is the fishing——"

"I have thought of that; and the supper need not hinder it. I have reckoned the tide in; we can drop out to lift the nets before midnight. Here is gold; get all things necessary, and spare not."

"When it is for thy birthday I will see that the feast is good and plentiful."

Then the subject was dropped, but the premonitory nature of the girl, even in this first hour of the supper question, gave her some sort of dim warning. "I wonder why father wants a birthday supper," she asked herself. "He never had such a thing before. What is it the beginning of?"

Such questions are more readily suggested than answered. We seem to be forced to do things; and then as soon as this bondage is accepted, we are weakened and made irresolute by half-warnings, by presentiments, wavering and ironical; and by advices that it is all but impossible to follow. Such instructions come from those enemies which we all cherish in our souls; and the soul friends we might have, and whose whispers would be our salvation, are not heard for false, predictive fears, so importunate that they destroy that serenity in which alone the voice of the divine within can be heard.

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Busy, and apparently very happy, Thyra passed the interval between her father's return and the birthday festival. The house was in that confusion which is necessary to a more exquisite order; and Paul, keeping much away from it, left plenty of sweet opportunities for Hector's visits. Indeed, he made himself so useful that Thyra had no hesitation in saying to her father, "I have done this and that today, but Hector has been helping or I had not done it. He went with thy message to Stromness, and the Sweyns will be pleased to come; and he brought home some early heather and has made posies and wreaths, and wilt thou but look how beautifully he has arranged the Indian shells," etc., etc. Paul did not like to make objections. He was going to break up that affair very soon, and it would be more kind to do so with one strong wrench, than with perpetual little twists. So in these days the young man came and went as he wished, even in Paul's very presence, and withal was so kind and so respectful, that Paul sometimes wished he was a Norseman—then—then—perhaps—who could tell?

At length Tuesday arrived, and Thyra met her father in the morning with a kiss; and the servants came bowing and smiling, and giving him good wishes; and Paul felt a little foolish and ashamed. He had not wanted such a fuss as Thyra had made; a good supper and some hot toddy, and his friends to eat and drink with him, that was all he had desired;

but he could not find it in his heart to make objections to the decorated room, and beflowered table, though he felt sure the silly idea came out of Maran's sentimental Scotch nature.

However, the company was charmed with the gay house and the pretty arrangements for the feast, and Paul easily fell into the general mood of approbation. And when the Dominie entered, and took the head of the table, the pride and satisfaction of every guest were complete. Cheerfully the meal was eaten to a general conversation regarding the captured whale, and the prospects of the fishing season; but over the sweetmeats and hot toddy they began to tell stories, and to sing songs, the Dominie opening this part of the entertainment with a clever fable very suitable to the fishing then in progress, as it accounted in its way for the herring being counted king of all the fish in the North Sea; and also gave a little reproof to Vesta Hay, on whose pretty face he had seen a scornful look, as she shook out her new skirt, in passing the cheaper home-made gown of Christina Bork.

"Listen, friends," he said, "and I will tell you how our dear good herring came to be king of the fish in the North Sea. On a certain day all the fish in these waters were gathered together to choose a king. And the fluke, he that has the red spots on him, stayed at home to make himself gay, putting on all his red spots to see if he would be king, and so he was too late, for when he came, the herring had been

made king of the North Sea. Then this red-spotted fluke curled his mouth up on one side and said scornfully, 'A simple fish like the herring to be a king!' and as you know, my friends, his mouth has been to one side ever since. Now who will tell us something next?"

And Hector rose and said, "We have a tale about king-making in the West Highlands; and it shows how those who think they will win in a race, because all things seem for them, may be left behind by a rival, clever and wily enough to outwit strength and circumstances. The eagle and the wren once tried which could fly highest, and the one who flew highest was to be king of the birds. The wren flew straight up. The eagle flew in great circles. And when the wren was tired he settled on the eagle's back. By and by the eagle was tired, and he stopped and cried, 'Where art thou, wren?' 'I am here above thee,' said the wren; and so the wren won, and the eagle's strength only helped the little bird's cleverness."

Then Olaf Peterson told a story from the Orkney sagas; and Paul recited a poem about the whaler's hard life; and others sang old Norse sea songs; and Thyra and Hector chanted some of Fionn's Questions; Hector asking, and Thyra answering them:

" 'What is swifter than the wind?' "

" 'A woman's thought between two men.' "

“ ‘ What is blacker than the raven? ’ ”

“ ‘ *There is death.* ’ ”

“ ‘ What is whiter than the snow? ’ ”

“ ‘ *There is the truth.* ’ ”

“ ‘ What is more plenteous than the grass? ’ ”

“ ‘ *The dew on the grass.* ’ ”

“ ‘ What is sharper than the sword? ’ ”

“ ‘ *The reproach of an enemy.* ’ ”

“ ‘ What is the best jewel? ’ ”

“ ‘ *A sharp knife.* ’ ”

“ ‘ What is the best of actions? ’ ”

“ ‘ *A high deed and a low conceit of it.* ’ ”

Gazing into each other's eyes, and musically chanting this catechism, Hector and Thyra made a charming picture. He was in his finest Highland costume, and Thyra in a white gown, brightened with beautiful coral ornaments her father had brought her from the Mediterranean.

“ That is a very good piece,” said the Dominie, when they had ceased, “ and I have not heard it before. Where did thou learn it, Thyra? ”

“ Hector MacDonald taught me it,” she answered, bending her head first to the Dominie and then to Hector. “ He said that Fionn would only marry the woman who answered all his questions, and that Graidh-ue, daughter of the King of Ullin, answered them. There are many more, but I have not learned them yet.”

Then Paul said: “ Robert Thorson, it were ill indeed to have a friendly meeting, and not have a few

verses from 'The Lily.' " * And the Dominie added:
 "That is well said. It is the best of hymns."

"There are a hundred verses in it, Dominie. It is longer than a sermon, thou knowest."

"But say for us only those few verses thou spokest on Peterson's boat. Thou must remember; we were waiting for the nets to fill."

Then Thyra, who was sitting at Robert's right hand, leaned toward him and said in a whisper: "Speak to us, Robert; I would like it." And blushing with the pleasure of her kind glance and voice, Robert rose. There was a few moments' silence, full of a serious expectation, while Robert spoke to his soul and called it to reverent recital:

"Sweet Jesus, O my blessed light,
 Who dead men dost to life invite,
 Lift me from out the devil's hold,
 Dear Lord, and keep me in Thy fold.
 With folded hands, in loving way,
 Let all created beings say
 Upon their knees, in sweet accord,
 Their praise before Thy face, O Lord!

"All skill of words would be in vain,
 Though man endeavored to explain

* "The Lily," a great Norse religious poem of the early part of the Fourteenth Century, written by Eyestein Asgrimsson. It consists of one hundred stanzas, the subject being the life of Christ and Mary. Asgrimsson was a monk of the Augustine order, in the monastery of Thikkirboer, Iceland. The poem is remarkable for its noble sentiments, the natural flow of the story, and the musical stream of its verse.

What joy to Adam old it gave
When Christ came sinful man to save.
Then from the dead triumphant rose
On Sunday morning to disclose
To me His immortality;
This gracious Lord who chose to die.

“ ‘ And now He holds his Kingly seat
On God’s right hand in glory meet;
With open arms He bids all come,
To Heaven, their true, their glorious home.
Thee, Jesus, by Thy mercy great,
Thy body and manhood, I entreat,
O sweet Lord, to acknowledge me;
Me, in Thy Kingdom graciously.
With folded hands in loving way
Let all created beings say
On kneeling knees, with sweet accord,
Their praise before Thy face, O Lord!’ ”

The sweet solemnity induced by Robert’s exquisite rendering of this most holy and loving prayer was the happy climax of the feast. Robert could hardly have shown to more advantage, as with face uplifted and hands outstretched he entreated the “ Sweet Lord Jesus by his body and manhood to acknowledge him.” In those moments he forgot earthly love or care, and his countenance was calm and beautiful with the interior light of the soul.

Thyra gazed at him with a noble admiration; but Hector’s eyes flashed such anger and hatred, that he was fain to veil their evil spirit behind his drooped eyelids. The prevailing feeling, however, was so full of mutual good-will that Paul knew the best moment



WITH FACE UPLIFTED.

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for his purpose had arrived. As soon, therefore, as Robert sat down, he rose; and the solemnly happy hush that had reigned for a few moments was broken by these astonishing words:

"I ask you all, my friends, to rise and drink to the health and happiness of Thyra Varrick and Robert Thorson."

An immediate confusion of joyful exclamations, good wishes, and clinking glasses followed; but shocked as Thyra was, she instantly recovered herself and decided on what was to be done. The happy confusion allowed her a minute's time, and in it she whispered to Robert, "I do not blame thee. Say nothing to the purpose. Keep thyself to thyself." So, when the noise ceased, he said simply:

"My friend Paul has done me a great honor. I thank him and all."

Immediately one of Paul's sailors, who had been instructed for this purpose by Paul, cried out:

"But when, then, is the wedding-day? Shall not the bride tell us the day? Shall she not bid all present to the bride feast? I say yes!" There was a smiling silence, and every eye was fixed on Thyra.

She was white as snow with anger; but she steadied herself as if she was frozen to ice, and answered: "Friends of my life long, I keep my own counsel about my own affairs; but I will name my wedding-day in time for all of you to get new clothes to dance on it." There was more acclaim at these words, but

the Dominie saw the passion burning to white heat in the girl's face and eyes, and he was just going to speak some calming words, when Thyra added:

"As it seems we are to be named in pairs, let us now drink a good wish to the two best friends of my life days—my father, Paul Varrick, and my kind cousin, Maran Flett;" and as she said these words she looked steadily in her father's face. He struck the table with his hand, but the Dominie's hand was on his in a moment, and then he smiled in a sickly, scornful way, and held his peace; while Maran uttered a little cry, covered her face, and laughed hysterically. "Speak!" said the Dominie authoritatively. And Paul rose and said:

"Thyra is right. I have done my best. Maran Flett also." Then, with a sudden passion, "Let Thyra Varrick see that she lives accordingly!"

There was a threat in his voice, and the Dominie, shocked at the sudden change of feeling round the table, stood up and, taking out his watch, looked at it attentively. "The time has come to part," he said. "The *Meum and Tuum* will take all out to their boats; and half an hour is left to change the garments of feasting for the garments of fishing. May the Good Being bless us, one and all. Amen!"

Then he moved his chair from the table and, taking Paul's arm, said: "I will walk with thee to thy boat, and Robert will take her out; and MacDonald will look after the women folk and see them to their homes.

PAUL VARRICK PROPOSES 113

There have been a few good hours, good foods, and good thoughts, and some innocent mirth, but now, men :

“ ‘ Come! Come! Come!
For the tide runs right,
And the blessed herring
Are silvery white.
Thousands and millions
For you and for me;
Filling the nets
In the Great North Sea! ’ ”

His resonant bass voice, with its imperative “ *Come! Come! Come!* ” stirred the men like a battle-cry. Chairs were turned over in the hurry of departure; adieus forgotten in song; and the women gathered round the door and watched the men hastening to work, yet filling the night spaces with their rough, melancholy voices as they turned away, here and there, towards their own homes, until even the Dominie’s resounding call was lost in the sound of the sea.

Then Thyra had a hard half-hour. The women had their hoods and cloaks to put on; and they wanted to talk, to ask questions, and to express with half-veiled sarcasm their opinions. And Thyra would not talk, so that at last they went away ill-pleased and critical of the whole evening. Before they were well beyond the gate she shut the door with a passionate clang and, putting out the lights, left the deserted festival board in all its confusion and disorder. Then she ran swiftly upstairs and locked herself in her room.

She could not endure the dreadful thing that had been forced on her. She cried out against it. No love, no care for her future was excuse enough for such a pitiless ambushade. And beside her own wrong, she was chagrined beyond measure at the wrong she had done Maran, and the spoiling and breaking up of the feast an hour before the time appointed. This last—the least of her troubles—she took up first. She could not find words to complain of it, but as yet no words were able to relieve her anguish about wrongs more personal.

“I worked so hard—I had everything so good and so well ordered—I could see that all of the women were astonished. None of them could have found the least thing to complain about; and now they will get up early to talk of Thyra Varrick’s failure of a party. They will say—oh, what will they *not* say? It is dreadful! I can’t endure it! How could father do such a cruel thing?” And this last question, repeated over and over, at length helped her to excuse herself.

“Father brewed his own bitter yeast, and he must eat the bread made from it. Yet I am truly sorry. The Dominie was angry, too; he sent me a glance that turned me sick. I shall have to answer him next. And Hector did not do right. No, he did not! If father had named me with Hector, and I had promised myself to Robert, I know well that neither Dominie nor father had kept Robert silent. He

would up and speak such plain words that no one would have dared to deny them. He would have said straight out: 'Paul Varrick, thou art behind time; thy daughter Thyra is to be my wife. She herself has said so; and I will not have her name joined with any other name but my own.' Such words as these Robert would have given father, and I would have been a proud girl this night if Hector had stood up in that way for my promise to him. But he was silent; he left me to speak, and he went off laughing with Maran and the rest of the girls. 'Tis true, he whispered he would come back, but he need not trouble himself. I will not see him. I am not in love with him to-night. In my humiliation he did not help me. Robert would have instantly thrown my father's words back in his face if I had been betrothed to him, and father had schemed to make me publicly disown him and say another man was my lover. Hector MacDonald, thou didst not prove as true as thou shouldst have been! Well, then, I stood up for myself, and not so badly. I wonder how father likes being given away, without his 'yes' or 'no' about it? I had the best of him to-night; but what shall I do? What shall I say in the morning?"

All night long she wrestled with these questions. All night long torturing spasms of chagrin about Hector's passivity, and the social failure of her party, made her shiver, and hide her face in the pillow, and cry out in stifled misery. And when morning came

and she ought to have gone downstairs she could not do it. She heard her father scolding the servants and directing the putting in order of the untidy room, with a kind of language whose meaning was plain; and her fear and sorrow turned to indifference, and she set herself against him with all her might.

It was not long before he came to the foot of the stairs and called her. She did not answer him at all. Then she heard him ascending, and as steps have voices, she understood her father's angry mood by his feet: his tongue was not necessary. And the sound of his feet made her stubborn.

"Very well," she muttered, "stamp thy utmost. I am not like thee for nothing."

He knocked peremptorily at her door. He knocked louder, and Thyra sobbed the louder. He tried to open the door. It was firmly locked and bolted. He knocked louder, and cried in a passionate voice, "Wilt thou answer me?" And only the same sound of ungovernable weeping answered him.

"Come to thy breakfast.

"I have something to say to thee.

"Thou hadst better answer me, thou good-for-nothing woman!

"Wilt thou come downstairs?

"Art thou sick?

"Speak! Thyra, speak! or it will be the worse for, thee."

These and many more demands and chidings and passionate threats she answered only with the same sounds of distressful wailing; and Paul finally went away without any satisfaction. He could not eat his breakfast. His food tasted like ashes; he pushed away his plate and went once more to the foot of the stairs. Thyra was still weeping. He began to feel in the wrong. He was miserable. He was sick. He was angry with everyone. He went up and down the house like a madman, but there was no response from Thyra's closed room. In a couple of hours his passion wore itself out; and he went to the boat. Robert was busy on her, but he would hardly see him.

"Now, then, what is the matter with *thee*?" he asked. "I have done nothing to *thee*."

"Thou hast done me the greatest wrong that was possible. Thou art no longer my friend. Wilt thou sell me thy half of the boat? Or wilt thou rather buy my half of her. We will not sail together any more."

"Robert! What the devil—Robert! *Kinsman!*"

"That is what I mean."

Then Paul turned on his heel and walked away without a word.

CHAPTER VI

The Alternative—Robert or India

AS soon as Paul went to the pier Thyra went to Maran Flett's. She was sure Maran also would be angry, but, on the contrary, Maran gave her an affectionate welcome.

"You did fine last night, Thyra," she cried; "fine, both for yourself and for me. You have given me the stroke oar in Paul Varrick's boat. It is myself that can now shrug the shoulder, and pity poor Paul and say I am too fond of my freedom to be ringed for any man. Half Kirkwall will be here, soon or late, and I can now give your father payment in his own coin. Paul Varrick and Maran Flett! I have come o'er the names a hundred times since you joined them. This taste of revenge is just a cordial o' gladness to me, though I'm a bit frightened at liking it so well. We are curious creatures, Thyra; wonderful and fearful; and the less we are tempted the better we are."

"Father will have his say, too, Maran."

"Ay, will he! He will go up and down cuckooing about the matter, explaining and denying, till he simply wearies everybody. I shall keep my com-

posure and a smile, and a shrug or a word of pity or friendly liking will do the whole business. But mind this, Thyra, changes not to be told will come out of last night's ploy. I can testify to that truth afar off."

"Maran, I came away without any breakfast. Father was in one of his rages, and I was afraid of him." Then she told Maran what her tactics had been, and Maran laughed heartily.

"You did right to give him nothing but tears," she said; "he can match the devil with words, but he can't cry and sob." She looked admiringly at Thyra, and then, with a smile of satisfaction, ejaculated, "My certie! the sense of the creature!"

"If you had ever seen father in a bad temper."

"I have. Your father is one of the useless bodies that can attend only to one thing at a time, so when he is in a passion he is in a passion from head to feet. He is perilous to trifle with then, and a discreet woman may well keep behind a bolted door. Women folk have a natural perception anent such things; your mother had."

"There is the Dominie, too, Maran. He gave me a look beyond words. Maybe it was not right to put my father to open shame. There is the Fifth Commandment; and the Dominie will be saying, as he did once before, that nothing but punishment comes from breaking it."

"We'll not require, at this time, Thyra, to go into

what we may call the ethics of the matter. You have not yet asked after the lad you love; and I can tell you he was in a rage last night to match the worst your father ever blew up."

"I am not pleased with Hector. He ought to have spoken out there and then. It was a good opportunity."

"Well, then, argol-bargol it out with him. I am going to take in his breakfast; and you can have a cup of tea with him. I see Isabel Sinclair coming; she is just gasping to hear the news, no doubt. Go ben the parlor and have your eating, but I'll give one word of advice ere you go—let this strange lad alone and marry the lad you know. That Robert will make the best and most biddable of husbands, you may be sure. You may have as much faith in him as in your Bible. Fact!"

"I will give up Hector when he gives me up. Till then—never."

"Well, well, you have a stubborn will, and you be to take your own way."

"I thought you were all for Hector. Now you are going against us."

"Not I. It was my duty to say a few words on the other side. I've said them, and they'll do for a passing remark; you can take or leave it as you like best. But I'll stand by Hector and you through thick and thin, sure as I am a christened widow woman! There, now, Isabel is at the gate, and"

Hector is ringing his bell. You may as well answer it, for Isabel's clatter will do for the next hour, doubtless."

So Thyra answered Hector's call, and he was amazed and delighted at her early visit. Then they had their breakfast together, and a wonderful meal it proved. The clock was striking the noon-hour when they had finished their tea and conversation, and the upshot of the talk was an immense increase of Hector's power over the girl. He foresaw that with Paul and Robert against him he would soon find Kirk-wall an unpleasant residence, and he was quite determined not to leave the island without Thyra. But how to manage this matter was a subject full of difficulty. There was not the slightest hope that the Dominie would perform the marriage ceremony; but it was in the discussion of this matter that the first hint of the common Scotch civil marriage was dropped. Maran, though well accustomed to its acceptance in Fife, frowned when it was mentioned; and Thyra looked from her doubtful countenance to that of her lover's with an inquiry in her eyes she did not like to voice. It was only the mere supposition at that hour, but it was a supposition with all the possibilities of the mustard-seed to grow into a great tree. Thoughts and likelihoods, as yet without any more distinct form than the rack of a dream, were present in each heart. And the very admission that such a likelihood might or could become a reality,

though it was so dim and obscure, was the mustard-seed of the possible event. For the first step of any wrong-doing is to ask the heart if such a wrong-doing is possible.

The day passed like a dream, for the discussion of what is personal is always interesting; and Hector knew, as he bade Thyra good-night at her father's door, that when he left Orkney she would go with him. She had not, indeed, said so, but she had not refused as those refuse to whom the idea presented is an impossible one to realize. She had hesitated, and the woman who hesitates has lost. Her attitude had, indeed, infused Hector with such a degree of courage that he took no pains to avoid Captain Varrick, but walked boldly through the town with Thyra on his arm, and so to the very threshold of her home.

It was well for all that Paul did not see him; for after Robert's offer to sell his share of the *Meum and Tuum* Paul was in a mood whose very silence was terrifying. Thyra escaped without notice to her room, and the next morning met him silently with downcast eyes and a manner full of sadness and contrition. She did not speak during the morning meal; neither did her father; and in this voiceless antagonism several days wore wretchedly away. During them Robert sent the money for his share of the *Meum and Tuum* and Paul sent it back with this message:

“It is worse than blood-money. Thou mayst fling it to the bottom of the sea!”

Paul really felt it to be what he said, “worse than blood-money.” He looked at the gold with anger and loathing. It was the ineffectual price of a friendship he had believed to be lasting as life. He would not go near the boat; neither would Robert; and she lay rocking on the water with almost a sentient look of unhappiness and desertion about her.

This state of affairs between men so prominent as Paul and Robert could not long be ignored among the sailors and fishers of Kirkwall. It was discussed everywhere but in Paul’s presence, and his presence was in itself the most eloquent of all decisions. He looked like a man possessed. Some thought him fey, and slipped out of any boat he entered, lest they might share his doom. Others knew that he was in the throes of an almost unendurable sense of injury he had not deserved, and of friendship true and faithful, counted treacherous and trodden under foot. It was pitiable to see the men if they met—Paul’s longing, angry look and Robert’s unseemingly conscious of it; the intense feeling of both men so filling the narrow street that, if there were twenty others present, there seemed to be only these two.

It was Thyra who stood between them. The day after the party Robert had tried to have some explanation with her; but she was at Maran’s all day, and though Paul did not witness her return on Hec-

tor's arm, Robert did. He told himself then that Thyra, out of simple contradiction, was giving Hector opportunities she would not have done if events had been left to her decision or even to their natural course. And when he learned that the Dominie had been Paul's adviser in the matter he was not conciliated. What right had Paul to take his affairs to the Dominie? He could understand by his own sense of rebellion and indignation against the interference of others how indignant Thyra must feel, had even a right to feel. Thus, all his anger settled on Paul and the Dominie; he partly excused the latter because of his office, for if Paul went to him for advice it was his duty to give it; and how could he, an old bachelor without wife or daughter, and who had perhaps forgotten his own love passage,—if he had ever had one,—judge a girl like Thyra?

It was the evening of the second day after the unfortunate party before Robert saw Thyra, who covered her face and wept when he spoke to her; indeed, she was apparently so troubled that Robert wept with her. She was also very quiet and sorrowful as she said again:

"I do not blame thee at all, Robert. It was such a thing as could not have come out of thy heart."

"Thy father was ill-advised," answered Robert. "It was the Dominie. If one word of this plan had been said to me I would have told him, 'Thyra Varrick is beyond making-do, either by cunning or force.'"

Nor do I want thee on such terms. If thou comest not to me of thine own good-will I must walk alone to the grave. I shall arrive at rest some time, either on land or sea. What comfort canst thou give me, dear Thyra?"

"I cannot give thee what I have not myself. I do not know yet what I must do."

"But in time, in time, Thyra?"

"Yes, in time it is to be hoped I shall feel better. Oh, Robert, be sorry for me now."

"God knows I am sorry for thee!"

"Then let me alone a little while. I cannot bear even to think of that dreadful night. Not one present has ever been to see me since. Oh, Robert! Robert!"

"My dear, sweet Thyra!"

"I have heard that you had quarreled with my father."

"That is the truth. I will sail with him no more."

"It was for love of thee he did this foolish cruel thing. Thou must not be angry with him."

"I will forgive him as soon as I can. And wilt thou think kindly of me! Thou wert so sweet, so dear, that night I brought thee from Maran's. I thought then thou lovedst me."

"I thought so, too."

"Then MacDonald——"

"Speak not of him."

"I will not if it grieve thee. Thyra, give me a word of hope before I go."

"I have said that I do not blame thee. I have said that in time I may feel better. What more is possible? Often thou hast been patient when I said 'wait.' This is the worst strait that has ever come to me. Pity Thyra, and ask her not for what she has not."

Then he rose and drew her to his side and, lifting a handful of her flowing hair, kissed it with passionate tenderness. She spoke not, she moved not, but when he disappeared she lifted the same tress and gazed at it, and on her face there was, for a moment, that wistful look of affection given to persons and things seen for the last time.

This interview did not bear fruit at once. Paul and Robert were not desirous to meet. Paul went to Stromness in Grimm's boat; Robert took a place in Erik Bork's; and the *Meum and Tuum* lay at her anchor lonely and melancholy; a visible proof of broken faith and slain love. Men averted their eyes from the forlorn creature, for she looked as wretched as if she had a soul. To them she *had* a kind of life. They had often seen her battling with mighty winds and baring her breast against mountainous billows, safely keeping the charge of life committed to her. And, in some occult way, she was to them Paul and Robert's sorrow and quarrel made manifest. They had only to look at her a few mo-

ments in silence, and they became oppressed with the trouble that left her idle and desolate in the very heart of the fishing season. So they averted their eyes and fell suddenly into silence as they passed; for their primitive natures divined that certain objects as well as certain persons attract misfortune and may not even be looked at with safety.

The days wore on, and in their unhappy passage the anger between Paul and his daughter died out, or appeared to do so. They began gradually to speak a few words to each other about the daily events common to both their lives; thus, Paul would say, "I am going to Stromness"; and Thyra ask in reply, "When wilt thou return?" But it had been better if some passionate explanation, followed by reconciling tears and kisses, had brought them back to their old confidence and freedom of speech. As it was, they grew further apart with every day's formal intercourse; and to Paul it seemed as if his child was indifferent to his affection, and that he was continually looking at a blank wall. They were two separate, divided silences which, brought together, might have found loving voice.

In this trinity of unhappy souls Thyra alone had compensating affection. Indeed, the very separation existing between them gave her unusual freedom and advantages with her lover; while she added to these things a reckless disregard for public opinion. And if Maran reasoned with her on the consequences which

public opinion would surely visit her with, she at once threw the responsibility upon the Dominie and her father.

"They have brought things about," she said; "and they must look after the consequences. Father ought to have known I could not be driven into marrying Robert, even by the Dominie. Why does not the Dominie himself get married? Let him answer that question. Surely he ought to take the road he wants other people to walk in."

Yet she had been glad when she heard of the Dominie's interference; it allowed her to lay the burden of her disobedience and anger upon his shoulders instead of her father's. But even with the Dominie to blame, no woman can safely and happily defy the conventionalities of her era and locality. Those people who admitted "Thyra had not been wisely constrained" were yet soon angry at her pronounced preference for the stranger Scot. She was too frequently seen with him on the streets or on the water, and they began to say, "she had gone far enough," and to reason with and advise her. And Thyra was in no mood for advice, and so flagrantly defied it.

"If father does not like the talk," she said to Maran, "let him stop it. He set the tongues of the town wagging against me. It is his affair, not mine. And why should I stop walking and sailing with Hector? All the other girls walk and sail with the lads that love them. Let me alone!"

In that small isolated community it was not possible to let her alone. It came to a time when the matrons said, "Thyra Varrick is a bad example. She is disobeying her father, flinging his words in his face morning, noon, and night. She is coquetting with a stranger only for the pleasure of wounding a good father, who has offended her." They set their tongues and faces against Thyra; they forbade their daughters to speak to her; they quarreled with Maran for keeping Hector in her house and thus giving him daily opportunities of influencing Thyra.

For he did undoubtedly influence her; and, indeed, was gradually bringing her to a point where she could find no other refuge but in his love and presence; then—then, he would leave Orkney, and Thyra would go with him. The Scotch marriage law was broad and easy. A simple confession before witnesses that they were man and wife was a perfectly legal ceremony. The absence of the clerical blessing and element was indeed deprecated and even seriously disapproved among the religious, respectable citizens; but this disapproval did not invalidate the civil marriages; and they were by no means obsolete or even infrequent.

But a marriage of this simple kind had never entered Thyra's imagination until Hector put it there; and its first inception was not encouraged. The *éclat* of a public ceremony, of the bridal march to the kirk, of the solemn joy of the religious office and

sanction, of the almost public feast and dance, were the circumstances surrounding Thyra's conception of herself as a bride. Yet in these lovely summer days she was herself preparing events which would make such a triumphant transit from maidenhood to wifehood an impossible thing.

For the progress of this love affair was greatly accelerated by the fishing season. Every able man was then in the boats, and the women were quite as busy on shore, selling and curing the fish caught. The Dominie was out and in with the men, and there were few evenings in which his clear, resonant voice was not heard leading the fishers in the evening hymn, as they lay waiting for the nets to fill. He had the sea and the men of the sea in his heart, and was as much at home with them in the boats as in the pulpit.

He was going to the pier one day when Deacon Hacon came out of his house and stayed him. "Dominie," he said, "there is something to tell thee; and maybe I have already kept it too long. Last night I dreamed a dream, and I dream true; and now I know that I must speak what is on my mind, or I also may be in the fault. One of the babes thou christened is not on Christ's road—far from it; and thou art off to catch herring while the devil is after her soul. I must tell thee what I know."

"Speak out, deacon. Is it about Thyra Varrick?"

"It is. She is with that MacDonald lad from morning to night, and Maran is not willing, perhaps

not able, to bring her to reason. None of our women speaks to her now, and there is no man that cares to speak to her father or to Robert Thorson about the girl and her doings. None but thee can speak to Paul; and as for Robert, he came near to striking one who named Thyra in a way he liked not. The girl is clever and deceives both men. She has no mother; her father is only half friends with her. Thou must be mother and father both."

"I interfered once, deacon, and got blame on every hand."

"Wilt thou neglect thy duty because thou gettest blame for doing it? A lamb of thy flock is being carried off into the wilderness; wilt thou go to the boats with the ninety-and-nine, or wilt thou leave them and go seek the one straying in such evil company?"

"Thou hast left me no choice. I must do what I can." Then he turned back and, as he went slowly and sorrowfully homeward, he saw Hector and Thyra climbing the hill on which Paul's house stood. He followed and soon overtook them. At his greeting they turned and separated, and he stepped between them. In this way he walked in their company until they reached the door of Paul's house. There he bade Thyra good-night, and, taking Hector's arm, said:

"I want to say some words to thee. Walk back with me."

Rather reluctantly Hector agreed. The sweet, lingering adieu and the last kiss at the gate had to be omitted, and the lovers were not pleased at the Dominie's interference. They understood what kind of words were to be said, and Thyra smiled scornfully at their uselessness. "But I am glad Hector is to bear the brunt this time," she thought.

Indeed, nothing was gained by this interview, though the Dominie blinked no truth. He began at the first. He spoke of the hopelessness of any attempt in favor of Prince Charles, and, because of this futility, he begged Hector to leave a place where his presence could only breed quarreling and heartache and perhaps sin. He described Paul's grief and anger at his daughter's disobedience, and without scruple he included Hector in the punishment certain to follow. "Sin and punishment grow out of the same stem," he said, "and, besides, it is well known to thee that Thyra Varrick has always been regarded as Robert Thorson's wife. She willingly accepted this position until thou interfered."

"I intend to make Thyra my wife," said Hector, with the indifference of one sure of success.

"It is not a good marriage for thee, nor yet for Thyra. Thy own people will not want a Norse fisher-girl among them, and Thyra's people are just as bitterly set against a Highlandman. I promise thee I will prevent such a calamity—if I can."

"Sir," answered Hector, "you cannot prevent it.

I will marry Thyra if she will marry me—and I think she will.”

“Thou art teaching her to disobey her father, to offend all her friends, to neglect her religious duties, to be reckless of her good name. Dost thou expect a bad daughter to make a good wife? She will not, never!”

“What my wife will be does not concern you, sir. She will not have to watch the sea and count fish. I shall make her a lady.”

“Thou wilt make her miserable, I see that. Well, then, I must do all I can to save the girl from thee. And yet,” he said solemnly, as he laid his hand on Hector’s arm, “yet if thou hast a mother or a sister spare her for her sake. If thou believest in the manhood of the Lord Jesus Christ, for his sake, spare her.”

Then Hector shook himself free and, without answer, went swiftly toward his lodging.

That night the Dominie did not sleep. Spiritually, he took Thyra in his arms as if she were a babe and brought her again with prayer to her Maker and Saviour. He walked restlessly about, blaming himself both for interference and non-interference. He watched the day-spring and the return of the boats with sorrowful impatience, for he had sent a message to Robert, and at this hour he wanted him and him only. Surely it was Robert who had the best right to reason with the woman he loved; and even yet the

Dominie could not give up the hope that such reasoning would be effectual. He told himself that old love was easily rekindled; and when he thought of Robert's beauty and sincerity and natural eloquence, he could not believe that a girl who had once listened to him with love would now be deaf to his pleading.

Robert received the Dominie's message as soon as he reached his home. He was tired and sleepy, but it drove weariness and sleep far off, for he instantly understood the call to relate to Thyra. He drank some tea, dressed himself for the visit, and then went quickly to the manse. The Dominie was waiting for him, and there was no delay in their confidence and no reservation. Then the question came to both men with such imperative force, that they asked it with a simultaneous anxiety in the same moment:

"What is to be done?"

"Thou must go and see Thyra," said the Dominie to Robert. "The time for patience and putting off has gone by. Thou must now be willing to take her, if needs be, against her will. It is for her salvation; think of that."

"There is her father; Paul and I are unfriends now."

"Then go first to Paul. It was not well in thee to quarrel with him. Thou must humble thyself for Thyra's sake. Thou must tell him all I have told thee. Other men have feared to do so; but be thou

not afraid. He will listen if thou speak. Tell him that his daughter's good name is in danger, that none of our women is her friend, and if the opportunity comes remind him of Thyra's mother. If I could speak for thee or go for thee I would be thy servant; but all is in thy mouth. Speak, and be no coward. Thy words must find the heart of both Paul and his daughter. It is now August. The fair will soon be on. At the end of the month the weather will change, and the man will hardly venture the winter here. When he goes away from Orkney, will he go alone? Ask thyself this question. Thou, of all men, must answer it."

Without another word Robert went about the business before him. It was very painful in all its aspects, but if such danger threatened Thyra he could put his own feelings aside without a care. He went at once to the Inn to look for Paul, and found him there with three of his acquaintances. Two of the men were arguing noisily about the "takes" of the different boats during the past night; the third was sleepily smoking with closed eyes. Paul sat with them, but taking no part in the talk. His eyes were fixed upon a letter which he held in his hand, and his mind evidently wandering afar off. When Robert entered there was a sudden silence. Paul looked up and then down, and his face showed scarlet below the tan. All intently regarded the two men whose ruptured friendship had somehow or other influenced and

interested the whole fishing and sailor population of Kirkwall.

Without hesitation Robert walked up to his friend and, extending his hand, said softly:

“*Paul!*”

“*Thou!*”

“Wilt thou come to *our* boat? I would like so say some words to thee.”

“*Our* boat?”

“Thine and mine. Wilt thou come?”

Then Paul rose, and the men walked away together. Two of those present went to the window to watch them; the other resumed his pipe and his dozing, merely grunting an assent to Grimm’s remark:

“The two that were two yesterday, will be one to-day.”

The two that were yet two went silently to the boat together. She appeared to welcome the tread of their feet upon her deck, for she danced on the rising and falling water as if she already felt the wind in her canvas and the billows under her keel. Robert led the way to a bench and, seating himself, lifted his clear, honest face to Paul’s and said:

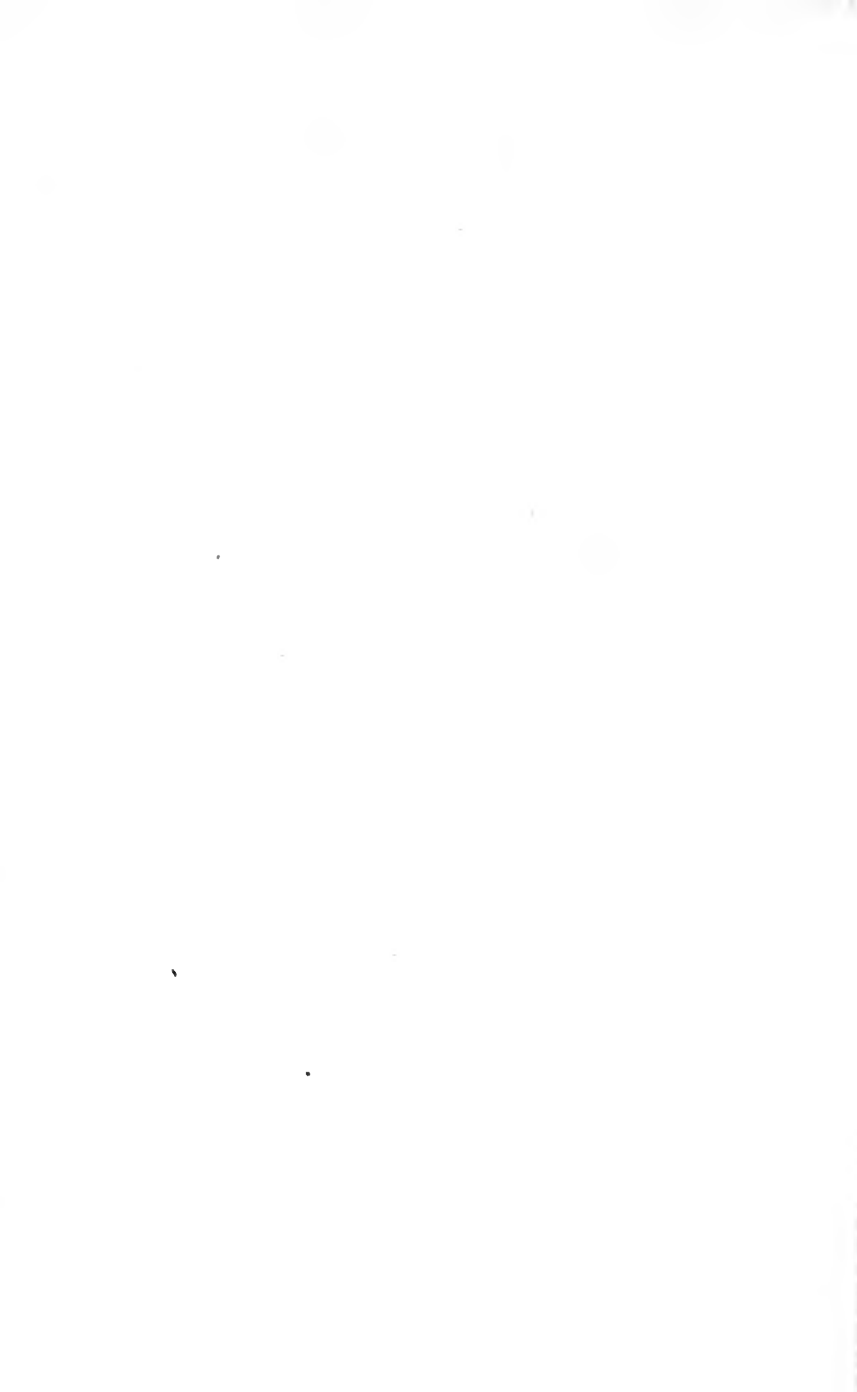
“I am sorry, Paul. Life is too hard without thy friendship.”

“I am well pleased that it is so with thee. Bear in mind that all this trouble is thine own fault.”

“The blame is mine, all of it; but many things say to me we are not happy apart. Cast my fault



THE TWO WENT SILENTLY TO THE BOAT TOGETHER.



behind thee into the deep sea. Wilt thou, Paul? My friend Paul."

"Yes," he answered with strong emotion, "yes, Robert, I will cast all memory of the ill between us out of my mind forever."

"Good be with thee for thy words. Now it is '*Mine and Thine*' again; and there is much need that we put our love and wisdom together for the sake of one dear to both of us. I am in a great strait, Paul."

"Well, then, ask counsel or help of none but me. That is my wish. Everyone has something to weep for. What is thy strait? Is it about Thyra?"

Then Robert opened the father's eyes with many strong, sad words. He told him all he had heard from many sources, all he had seen, all he surmised would happen; and, as Paul listened, he felt as if he must choke; the angry blood surged from his heart to the brain till he had to lean against Robert for support. He was beyond measure distressed and full of passion. But when Robert had finished all his confidence he answered:

"The mad creature is to be saved from herself and the handsome devil that has bewitched her. I will take no other thing in hand till this be done. But how may it be managed? I know not."

"I will do as the Dominic bid me. I will ask her plain and straight to be my wife between the 15th and

31st of this month. I will no more give way for her weeping. I will make her my wife if possible and then trust to God and the love he makes grow in the heart of a good woman."

"You give her too much time—say between the 15th and the 20th."

"I will give her two weeks, so much is only right."

"Well, then, until the 31st I will let the matter alone. Tell Thyra this much from me. If she becomes thy wife on any day before the end of August, I will give her the farm and the house that is by Finstown and the furnishings of the house, and, moreover, fifty sovereigns to be for her own, to do her pleasure with."

"I will tell her."

"And if she will not marry——"

"I will not think of that. I give thee my word to do my best."

"Listen to me. This morning I got a letter from Thomas Reid of Aberdeen. He offers me the *Indian Queen*, a ship of renown, for two years' traffic in the Eastern seas. Now, then, if Thyra will not marry thee she will go with me. On the night of the 31st I will take her on board the *Maid of Orkney*, which sails then for Aberdeen. I will give her two years in strange seas and foreign countries; and if this do not bring her back to her senses, she may take her own ill way forever."

"Say not that. She is as deep in thy heart as in

mine. Whatever comes we must stand by her—thou and I.”

Then they looked silently at each other for a moment or two, and in parting clasped hands. Robert's face was serious; it was his manifest heart, full of anguish and love. Paul dropped his eyes and sat in an attitude of despair. Something had gone to ruin at his side; it was the future of his child.

CHAPTER VII

Between Two Lovers

FOR a few minutes Robert stood on the pier considering his clothing. Would it help his plea if he went home and put on his best suit? He asked himself this question, and stood looking down at the blue flannel jacket and trousers he had on. He came speedily to the conclusion to see Thyra, just as he stood. "I must look thus in her eyes, when we are man and wife, all day and every day but Sunday," he thought; "and Thyra will not take or refuse me for the coat I have on." Then the thought of Hector's picturesque garb came to his mind, and he felt sure that it had influenced Thyra, for he muttered bitterly, "If he had been a fisher-lad in blue flannels he had not put me aside." Nevertheless, the reflection did not change his purpose, and he went without further delay to Paul's house.

As he approached the door he heard Thyra moving about and singing, or rather droning, "The Lay of Diarmaid," a very ancient Highland song. He watched her a few moments unseen. She was dusting the curiosities her father valued so much, and she was dressed like himself in the blue flannel woven and

dyed in every household. But in this simple gown, with its small, white collar, she was neat as a bird, and straight as a pine, and in Robert's sight loveliest of all. As she lifted a gorgeously colored tropical shell, and put it to her ear a moment, she looked so bewitching that he could not help uttering her name. She stopped singing and turned her face to him, asking with a little anxiety:

"What is the matter, Robert? Why art thou here so early in the day? Is father well?"

"Thy father is well, Thyra. Sit down at my side and I will tell thee why I have come so early."

She sat down, but with reluctance, and waited for him to speak. She had the shell in her hand, and she kept her eyes upon it as she passed it to and fro. It was hard for Robert to open the conversation, and so without preface he plunged into the depth of his desire, and said:

"I have come, dear one, to ask thee to marry me without longer waiting. Thou must answer 'yes' this time; thou must, indeed!"

"But why? How comes that?"

"I will tell thee all the 'why' and the 'wherefore.'" Then he told her the things said far and wide about Hector MacDonald and herself, adding, "The guessing is not all one way, but most people are sure he will leave Orkney this month. If so, every tongue will be pitying thee for a forsaken woman; and even that will be the best of their talk. Be my

wife, at once, to-day? No! Well, then, to-morrow? Have I not told thee what Vesta, and Jocunda, and Bork's wife, and Petersen's wife, and a score of others are saying? Make their evil prophecies lying words. Give me the right to shut up their ill thoughts in their ill hearts."

"I wish to do so, Robert. I hate the women of this town; envious, malicious creatures, every one of them."

"Then why not hold thy head above all of them? See, I am thy very servant in this matter. There is nothing I have that I will not give thee. Thy father, also, he has promised to see the law man, and deed over to thee at once the house and farm at Finstown, and to furnish it with all things necessary; and, beside that, he will put in thy hand fifty gold sovereigns for thine own use and pleasure. If it is thy will, we might go to Aberdeen for a month—perhaps even to Edinburgh. And as to fine clothing, I will not hinder thee in any of thy wishes. Thyra, dearest, sweetest of women; Thyra, my love! My life! My very soul! listen to me. It is for thy happiness as well as my happiness, or Robert Thorson would not ask thee in such a stress and hurry. I will give thee a week, Thyra; be my wife at the end of a week. Say 'yes' to me, darling. Say 'yes, Robert.' If thou couldst only know how I love thee; none can love thee as I do. My soul waits trembling for thy word. Thyra! Thyra! I am faint with fear!

Speak to me, woman; hast thou no pity? My heart is full; I can say no more—but wilt thou not speak?"

The last word was almost a cry, and the clasp of his hand hurt her.

"Robert," she answered, "let loose my hand. Thou hurtest me. Thou shouldst have some pity on me."

"I am all pity and love for thee. And if thou wilt but trust me I will teach thee to love me—thou wilt not be able to help loving me, I will be so good, so true, so patient, that in time thou wilt say in thy very heart, 'I have the best husband in the world.'"

"Wilt thou not wait just a little longer? It is the last time I will ask this favor."

"No, I will not wait longer any more. My haste is for thy sake. If that man go away—and he will go—the scorn and the talk that will follow, thou wilt not be able to brave, or to bear."

"My father will——"

"He is going to the East Indies for two years."

"Thou?"

"Think of this. If I marry thee after he has gone away, then all will say Robert Thorson is sorry for Thyra Varrick, so then he marries her out of pity. God only knows what they will say of thee and me. I must speak thus to thee; someone must tell thee the truth. It is my hard lot. Wilt thou be my wife one week from to-day?"

"No."

"Then two weeks from to-day?"

"No."

"Three weeks from to-day—that will be the last day of August. So long will I stand waiting for thy pleasure."

"Three weeks?"

"Well, then, three weeks. So, it is three weeks. Is it so?"

"Perhaps"—then she burst into passionate weeping and complaining. She buried her face in the soft cushion, and her slight form shook with emotion. Robert was in great distress. He knelt at her side, kissed her hair and her hands, and talked to her like lover and mother both. At length she said:

"It were well if thou left me now. Let me cry all my tears away. Wouldst thou like it if I wept at my bridal? Wouldst thou take me unwillingly and in tears to be thy wife, crying in the sight of all Kirkwall at my marriage to thee?"

"Yes, I would take thee joyfully; I would soon turn thy tears into smiles. Have some faith in me. I am begging thee now to take a happy life from my hand. I will marry thee to love, and honor, and many good days. Sweetest Thyra, say I may do so, in one week?"

"No, I will not. One week is too short a time."

"Yes, that is so. A girl must have many things to prepare. And we will have a great wedding; all Kirkwall shall go with us to the kirk, and sing with

us the wedding psalm, and hear the Dominie bless us, and say amen to it."

"Thou art talking foolishly. Dost thou think I will give these women any share in what concerns me? I hate such ways; I do hate them. When I marry thee I will go with my father to the Dominie's house, and thou wilt meet me there, and very few words shall be about it; and no one shall have an hour's merry-making, or feast, or wine, at my expense. And then, when the women get together to lie about me, they must make all of the lie up; I will not give them a shred of truth or likelihood to dress it in."

"Thou are wise and right. I am of thy opinion in this matter."

"There is another thing. I will not have my wedding spoken of. If it was known it would be talked of to life-long sorrow in a week. There is no sacred thing woman's tongue will not defile. My marriage shall not be named with their bad thoughts and words. They would wish me evil in their hearts, and their lips would send the evil abroad to hunt me out. Ill tongues shall not bring me ill luck."

"Again thou art wise and right. No one but thy father and thyself and Robert Thorson shall know anything at all about our marriage. There is, however, the Dominie."

"He least of all. When we go to his house it is time enough. He talks much with the women, and they read his very thoughts. They would see the

secret in his eyes, and if he happened to think of it they would catch the thought going from him and send it far and wide."

"That is true also. Well, then, for so simple a plan is not one week sufficient?"

"I have said 'no' to thee."

"Then two weeks?"

"I know not."

"Yes, dear one, two weeks. Say two weeks."

There was a pause of a minute. It seemed like an hour to Robert. He kept his eyes upon her lovely, troubled face, watching its changing expression, and trembling as he watched. At length she raised her eyes and asked, "When is my father going away? He has said nothing to me. Thou wouldst not lie to me, Robert?"

"I would not lie to thee, or to anyone. He got the word this morning early. He told me he would go on the 31st of August to Aberdeen. There he will take command of the *Indian Queen*."

"How does he go to Aberdeen?"

"In the *Maid of Orkney*. She leaves with the mail on that day."

"Then I will be married on the 31st. We can all go together to Aberdeen."

"It is a good thought, but it puts off our marriage for three weeks. I like not that."

"Be content, Robert. Three weeks are not long in coming and going. As they pass, see thou lettest

them go without suspicion. Go about thy business, and trouble me not more than usual. Thou mayst have too much of me when the three-weeks' wait is over."

"I can never have enough of thee, not in all eternity."

"I am cross and ill to manage;" and she could not help looking shyly into his eyes, and her glance shook and bewildered him. He took both her hands and kissed them. "Thou hast made me happier than any mortal man," he said; "thou art goodness and beauty, and I could give my life for thee gladly, to do thee good in every way. I lay this vow in the hands of God."

Then the high tide of his love came into his blood, rose to his heart, lifted him off his feet, and he went drifting upon some unearthly sea of rapture. She had at last consented; and he took no account of her reluctance, no account of her limitations and evasions and singular conditions; she had promised, and all heaven and earth was in her promise.

"O true love! true love! the strength of it!
And the height, and the depth, and the breadth, and the length
of it!"

For nearly half an hour after Robert's departure Thyra sat motionless, thinking with all her mind and heart. Not for a moment did she doubt a word Robert had said to her; and she was wise enough to foresee all the future consequences of the position in

which she had placed herself. If Hector should leave Orkney without her! She was forced to whisper the words audibly in order to realize them. The thought in vague, terrifying indistinctness had lain at the bottom of her consciousness for some time. He had said little lately of their marriage, though always speaking of their departure together after the summer.

Certainly that presupposed their marriage. She would not allow her thoughts to consider any other possibility. But it was now the time for him to be definite and in earnest, or else—what then? If her father went on a long voyage, and she was left with Maran, she needed no one to tell her that her life would be made unbearable by the scorn and isolation sure to be meted out to her. "And the women's tongues," she muttered; "nothing can bind them, not even the Fourth Commandment. They will slay me like swords." As for Maran, she was already fretful and weary of her authority and interference; she was resolved not to be left at her will and mercy. A marriage with Robert would be better than that; only, as he had pointed out to her, the marriage must take place before the townspeople imputed it to pity or some other humiliating reason.

She had just arrived at the conclusion that Hector must decide the subject, when she heard him coming up the road. He was whistling merrily, and the sound aggravated her. She did not know why, but she

understood, without any analysis, that men whistle when their minds are vacant and careless—that, in short, a whistling man is a thoughtless, indifferent man; and this attitude in her lover was so antagonistic to her own that it angered her. She would not turn her face to him as he entered, and he did not notice the omission. He was only eager to tell her that he had seen her father and Thorson go off to sea together in the *Meum and Tuum*.

“So the Captain and that big sea-dog are friendly again,” he said; “and by Saint Ninian my dirk quivers in its sheath when I see the fellow!”

“Dost thou mean my father? Thou shalt not speak so of my father; no, nor yet of Robert Thorson. Robert is my friend; and he may be my husband; ’tis like enough.”

“Do you wish to quarrel with me, Thyra?”

“There is no knowing.”

“What is it you mean?”

“This: I hear that thou art soon to leave Orkney; and yet I have not been told of thy journey. Well, then, it is my destiny to wed Robert, and I will do that at once, for I will not have the women say to me, ‘Robert married thee out of pity.’ Nor the men say to Robert, ‘Thou art a kind man to console the deserted one.’”

Then he took her hands, put his face close to hers, looked straight into her eyes, and said, “Thyra, I love you. Could I go away and leave you?”

"I know not," she answered.

"How much further can I prove it? I have lingered here month after month for your sake. I have forgotten all other love for your sake. I have neglected my duty for your sake. And I will vow to you I will never, never leave Orkney unless you leave it with me."

"My father sails for the East Indies on the last day of this month. He is to be away for about two years. I cannot be left alone; I need not tell thee why. So then Robert Thorson will give me his name to shield my name; and before my father goes he will see that it is so."

"You are my wife. Where are all the promises you have made me?"

"They are left forever where I made them."

Then Hector was really alarmed. He had supposed hitherto that Thyra was in one of those little tempers she often gave way to. "My dearest," he said, "you must not play with my very life in such words. You are mine! You are mine! It will go ill with any man who tries to take you from me. I say a thousand times in one, *you are mine!*"

"I am no more thine than a promise makes me. A promise is but a little breath. And it seems, also, that I have no power to promise myself to anyone. I am under my father's will till I am twenty-one, as thou knowest; and it is his will that before he sails for the East Indies I marry Robert Thorson."

“Then, Thyra, we must leave Orkney at once.”

She did not answer him a word.

“We must away with all haste. Some time ago I made arrangements for just such a crisis in our affairs. There is in the fishing fleet a good boat from the east coast of Ireland. Her captain is an Irishman, but the three men with him are MacDonalds from Skye. They will do my pleasure, whatever it is; and the captain is already bought by me. I have but to make a certain signal and their boat will be presently behind the rocky point near Maran’s. There they will stay until we are ready. Let me give the signal now; I will wait at Maran’s until you are ready to join me, and we may be at Thurso before we are missed.”

She looked at him with the angry words in her eyes that would not slip from her tongue; then she rose with a sudden great dignity.

“What hast thou in thy mind?” she asked. “Know this, that in the time to come I shall put no trust in thee;” and though he rose hastily and followed her she went indignantly away, and neither answered his words nor delayed her steps for his entreaties. He remained for an hour or more awaiting her return, pacing the room in such angry agitation that Thyra heard his movements upstairs; and three times he sent a servant with a note of passionate petition for some explanation of her displeasure.

Thyra was deeply offended at his attitude. She

was young and ignorant of life, but she knew well that before Hector asked her to leave her father and home he ought to have spoken of their marriage. Only as his wife could she go with him, and yet he had not named their marriage, which was the first and foremost step to be taken. As a fact, she had not given him time to do so. The only marriage possible had been so often talked over with Maran, and gone over in his own mind, that it lay there a circumstance as presupposed and necessary as the boat in which they were to sail. The slight importance he attached to the ceremony caused him to name the boat first; and Thyra's anger and desertion put a stop to further discussion. Indeed, it was a little time before he realized the mistake he had made, and understood the reason of her steady refusal to answer his entreaties.

Finally he went away and was very wretched. He had felt so sure of Thyra's love, so sure of her readiness to obey all his wishes, that he was stunned by her conduct; and her words relating to a possible marriage with Robert Thorson assumed an importance which would have been absurd in his eyes the day preceding. *If, after all, he should lose her!* The thought fired him from head to feet. Lose her! after deceiving Sara MacArgall for her sake. Lose her! after deserting his Prince and the cause of his Prince, for her sake! He was stupefied by the idea. He could not speak until he brought out the words with

a stamp of his foot. He went straight to Maran and begged her to send for Thyra and help him to pacify and persuade the girl. Maran promised to do so, but advised him to have patience until evening.

"Paul will be at his lodge to-night," she said, "and there will be time for talking and for listening. Thyra is an independent little cutty, but I know her mind. Oh, yes, before a bird flies you can see its wings."

"Is there any use, even now, in going to Captain Varrick?"

"None whatever. You might as well plow sand for a harvest as ask him to change his mind, especially when he has brought his mind to speech without action. In a few hours I will send for Thyra. She will, perhaps, have won over her temper then, and so listen to what you have to say. Only, you will require to open this conversation with matrimony. Dear me, the wrestle and care of this life are perfectly awesome!"

"You know as well as I do, Mistress Flett, that a religious ceremony is out of the question—at present."

"Well, then, there is the civil form; good enough it is, and many a happy wedding through it. My own Cousin Sandiford and Ann Scott asked no better, and it was sufficient to the last hour of their lives; and their children heiring property on it, without dispute, let alone law—which is ever doubtful and endless."

"And all is ready for a civil marriage. Terence Sullivan and Eneas MacDonald and Angus MacDonald and yourself will be the witnesses. We can do no better."

"Not in the present circumstances; and there is a kind of wisdom in building your wall with the stones you find at the foot of it. However, I counsel you to have the religious ceremony as soon as may be; nothing less will do to ask for a reconciliation on; not with Paul Varrick."

"For that we shall want both a Protestant and Popish clergyman."

"And a Popish priest you could not find in all Orkney. But, this or that, I do not know what I can say to Cousin Paul when you two are away. I know one thing: he will give me as many ill names as he can stick on one another; for he will be as full of passion as the Baltic is full of sea water."

"He is a brute in his passion. I do not fear him, any more than I do a mad bull."

"To be sure, just so, but there are times and seasons when a man might fear a mad bull and be no coward for it."

Thus they talked, and the day waxed and waned while Thyra fretted her anger away, and was sorry and forlorn and wretchedly uneasy. In the afternoon her father returned home. She heard him talking to the servants before she came down, and she understood the pleasant tone of his voice, and the hearty

laugh with which he answered some of old Elga's grumblings.

"He thinks that he has got his way," she said, with a toss of her head. "Honest man! he may yet find my way of crossing it."

But she went down with a smile, and Paul kissed her, and gave her five gold pieces; and she made him tea, and told him how glad she was that he had made friends with Robert. He waived aside that subject with a lofty magnanimity and answered:

"I have forgot all evil in the good tidings Robert has brought me. Now I shall carry a light heart on my long voyage. In the Indies I hope to gain much gold for thee; and I will bring thee home such Dacca muslins and embroideries and jewelry as no one in Kirkwall has ever seen or heard tell of. When thou art married to Robert——"

"Oh," she interrupted with a laugh, "there is many a slip between the cup and the lip, father."

"There must be no slip here," he answered, with a darkening face. "No slip here, Thyra! A slip here is to spill thy whole share of life happiness. If there is a slip here, then——"

"Then what?" she asked, with a bravado that hid a quaking heart.

"I will tell thee what. If for any reason thou refusest to stay with Robert Thorson as his wife, then thou wilt go with me. Wherever I go thou wilt go. That is what."

"Father!" she cried, in a kind of terror, "thou couldst not! Thou couldst not! It would be too dreadful. Two years at sea! And the storms, and the pirates, and the strange, cruel men, and the strange, cruel beasts I have heard thee tell about! Shut up in a ship for two years! I would rather die."

"I would rather thou didst die than marry one strange, cruel man we both wot of. Now then, thou hast the very truth. It is Robert or myself. It is this house, with Robert for thy husband; or it is the *Indian Queen* with me as thy protector; for, indeed, I think thou no more lovest me as thy father."

"I do love thee! I do love thee!"

"If thou dost love me then thou wilt cheerfully obey me. It is for thy happiness, thy welfare, I am striving; thy happiness, not for a day or a year, but for thy whole life. Thou madest Robert a promise this morning; thou must keep it."

"I know not."

"Thou must keep thy promise!" And with these words he pushed aside the table so violently that his cup and glass fell to the floor and were broken. He kicked the pieces aside and, lighting his pipe, went into the yard, leaned over the wall, and looked at the misty waters like a man reading a book. With sheer indifference he watched a boat, a fishing boat, cross his vision and disappear behind a rocky point to the northward. He had no idea that it was in any way connected with his life, or love, or fortune; yet he

was conscious, as it sailed out of sight, of a chill and of a great sadness that sunk his heart to his feet.

There is a long, dead roll coming up from the south, he thought; and if the hands in that boat don't stand by to reef they will have trouble beyond the point. For he saw the gray, colorless water, and he heard in his ears, and in his heart, the old, mysterious, hungering sound of the sea. Finding no comfort in sight or sound, he went down to the village inn, with a pain in his heart, muttering to himself as he walked slowly and heavily, "Sorrow and bad weather come uncalled, but we have them to fight and to bear."

As for Thyra, she was quite unconscious of the dilemma in which she stood, but she did not lose heart. The bravery of her race was in her, and at this crisis of her fate she never thought of weeping. Tears might induce others to work her will, but she was too wise to throw tears upon her own efforts. Her soul rather erected itself, and looked around about to see what way of escape was like to be the most possible and fortunate. She had her father's instinctive drawing to the sea; in her joy or her sorrow she wanted it, as a good child wants its mother. The face of the waters was the face that gave her the most intimate sympathy, so she went to the wall and looked into the misty space and felt the low moan of the breaking surf voicing her complaint.

If she had been sure of Hector there would not have been any uncertainty to decide; but, by her

impatience with her lover, she had sown doubt and fear in her heart regarding his intentions. He was, therefore, at present an indeterminate result. But she quickly came to a conclusion about Robert and her father. To marry Robert and remain in her father's house with him did not please her in any way. She had accustomed herself to dreams of an entirely new life with Hector—a full, rich, stirring life set to martial bravery and social splendor; and to settle down for scores of years to the homely pleasures, the small, social squabbings and triumphs of the fishing community of Kirkwall, and the tragedies of its sullen, tempestuous seas, was a destiny she could not endure to contemplate. It would be far better to go with her father. There would be dangers of many kinds, she realized; also that the ship would be to her a kind of sea kennel, in which she would be as little free as the hound Vigo would be in their yard kennel. But there would be at least many changes and adventures, and, above all, the repulsion and fascination of India's splendor and wonderful life.

“Between Robert and my father,” she said softly to herself, “there is no doubt. I will go with my father. But if Hector now stands up to every word he has said I will go with Hector.” She spoke the last sentence audibly and firmly, for there are times when we must speak aloud in order to convince ourselves of the validity of our thoughts.

She had scarcely come to this conclusion when

Maran's messenger arrived. She was glad to see her. The time of conflict had come; she did not wish to shirk it, no matter what the result might be. Very proudly and swiftly she walked through the village to Maran's; and the women who came to their doors to criticise, and the girls who stood silent with averted eyes, were both aware of a presence in the streets that defied their disapproval and their dislike. She had passed the Arctic circle of their enmity, and was in some neutral zone where the lance thrusts of their envy and censure could not reach her.

Hector met her before she was past the town, and she took his hand before disapproving eyes, and was pleased at his unconcealed devotion. And he soon made clear to her what her own impatience had deferred—his unswerving resolution to marry her, so that before they reached the privacy of Maran's parlor they were lovers again. With a glance and a word Hector had resolved all her uncertainty. She was now determined to be his wife, and to go with him to whatever fate was in store for them. The only point to settle was the best way in which to manage the thing they were resolved to carry out.

"There is no necessity to delay," said Hector. "To-morrow is sufficient for all our preparations. We can be married early the day after and slip away in Terence Sullivan's boat. Terence and the three O'Briens with him do not get on well with the Norse fishers, and he is anxious to be off. There is no cause

for delay. Whatever you wish to take with you, Thyra, must be brought here to-morrow, and I will see that it is put on board."

"You will go through the black gate if you go in any such-like hurry," said Maran, "and you will hardly win over the Firth at all if you try it earlier than the night of the 30th."

"One day is as good as another, and the earlier the welcomer," replied Hector. "Why should we wait?"

"More reasons than one. The main one is, that by that time the fishing fleet will have scattered, and every boat be taking its own way home. And also that Cousin Paul, bound by his promise to be in Aberdeen, will be unable to follow you. Before the boats scatter, at one word from Paul, the whole fishing fleet would be searching the Pentland seas for you. Bide your time, and you'll get your way."

"Sullivan's boat is a fast sailer—we will risk the chase; eh, Thyra?"

Turning to him, she smiled a bewitching assent.

"The fishing fleet does not frighten us off, Maran. We will fly in the face of it."

"Just so. You would fly in the face of Providence, or any other face that was in your way; but there is more than flying to be thought of. For instance, where are the witnesses to the ceremony? You are to have at least four, or I will not be one of them. Who are to be the others?"

“There is Terence Sullivan, and Con O’Brien, and his cousin James, and Maran Flett.”

“I know nothing about the first three—you might have named one worse than the last; and when folks can’t choose they must take. Furthermore, a wedding garment is a Bible ordinance, and Thyra is necessitated to have a wedding gown. I would not believe in any ceremony without it.”

“That is most unnecessary,” said Hector impatiently; “most unnecessary.”

“Is that your thought? Do I need to remind you of what happened to the man who went to the wedding without a wedding garment? A parable, of course, but all the same for our guiding and directing. I am a kind of a mother to Thyra, and I must see that all is done as near right as circumstances will permit.”

It was finally settled that the marriage should take place on the evening of the 30th, and that all arrangements should be made with reference to that date. In furtherance of this decision Thyra asked her father, the next morning, if he could send a man to take a box of her clothing to Maran’s.

“She is going to help me alter and mend my dresses,” she said; “a girl cannot be married without plenty of things to wear.”

“That is the truth; I had forgotten,” answered Paul; and he took out his purse and laid ten sovereigns on the table. “Get whatever is right and necessary for thee,” he said kindly; “if the money be

too little I wish to give thee more. Ask me. Thou must have a new dress; yes, I ought to have thought of that."

"I have my mother's wedding dress. It is best of all. Maran will make it to fit me."

"That is good. I remember—yes, I remember." Then he sighed and let his thoughts run backward a few moments to fetch again the golden hours of his own life. Thyra did not interrupt him, and he went out without further speech. In a few moments he returned, and drawing Thyra within his arm, said gently: "Trust me for a short time, Thyra; some day thou wilt be glad and thank me. I will wait and hope for that day. In half an hour I will send Barnaby Hay to carry thy box to Maran's."

In this box Thyra packed all her simple fineries and her mother's white satin wedding gown. There was really little sewing necessary, but Maran had her own ideas as to what was necessary, and Hector's opinion were set at naught when he attempted to reason with the two women on this subject.

"Thyra Varrick can't go into a married life in a state of perfect beggary, as it were, without clothes to her back," said Maran. "A few decent dresses are one of the fundamentals. Thyra is marrying a little up in the world, and I would think shame of myself if she had not the means of making herself look genteel." And Hector smiled and privately assured himself that he would dress Thyra in the MacDonald tartan as soon as they reach Inverness.

CHAPTER VIII

The Forbidden Marriage

THE days went slowly by and were full of anxieties and suspicions. Robert could not bear Thyra out of his sight, and he was so continually making excursions to Paul's or Maran's house, that Thyra soon began to believe she was being watched and to protest indignantly against having a spy set over her. Then Robert kept more out of sight, but she was aware that all her movements were known to him. Once every day she was compelled to endure his company and to listen to her father's plans for their comfort during his long absence; she had also to answer difficult questions, to put off or encourage preparations, to parry allusions, to submit to endearments, to allay and divert jealousy and distrust, and to make promises she had no intention of redeeming. The interval was full of painful, anxious diplomacy, and Hector was not able to help her; it was the policy of his position to keep as much out of sight as possible.

At length the desired day dawned, and Thyra opened her eyes to the thought that this was the very last of life as she had hitherto known it. And there

is a world of pity and regret in those two words, *the last*—the last day at her home, the last breakfast and dinner with the father who loved her so dearly and whom she was going to betray and deceive so cruelly. She was not so selfish as to be careless of these things; they oppressed her as soon as she opened her eyes and made her cheeks pallid with anxious sorrow.

Paul truly pitied her. He reminded himself that she had no mother to give her love and counsel at this critical time of her life, and he tried to be very gentle with her. Yet it was necessary to speak of the event so close at hand, and as they drank their tea, he said:

“Thyra, my dear girl, hast thou fully decided about thy marriage? Even yet, it is not too late to ask all thy acquaintances. I will send ’round the bell, if it is thy wish.”

“Thou wouldst kill me. I will have no one but thee present—thee, and the Dominic. Men and women, both, have driven me to this pass with their envy and malice and wicked tongues, and they shall not see me in my suffering.”

“Thou hast no need to suffer. Thou art speaking idle words, only to make me suffer—and I am going away and may never come back to thee.”

Then she arose and kissed him, and said whatever she believed would be the most comforting. And so he ventured to ask her at what hour she would be

ready the following morning, adding, “The *Maid of Orkney* sails at the noon tide. Tell me what thou wishest and it shall be done.”

“This is what I wish, father,” she answered; “my dress is at Maran’s. I will sleep at Maran’s to-night. Thou can come there for me at about ten o’clock. I and Maran will go with thee to the manse, and Robert will meet us there. See that nobody else knows anything about the matter.”

“But thy dress? Thy white satin dress in the morning? What will the women say?”

“Maran thought of that. I have a blue flannel skirt made to go over it; and my cloak and hood cover me well. I will slip them off at the Dominie’s and put them on again in order to reach the ship. Maran will take back my wedding dress to her house and put it in my box; and thou must have Barnaby there to bring it quickly before we sail. Is there any better way?”

“It is as good as any, since thou art ashamed of thy wedding and wishful to hide thyself from all thy friends.”

“I have no friends but thee and Robert. Perhaps when I come back they may forgive me for being beautiful.”

“My poor little girl! My heart aches for thee! If this is the way of thy wedding, I like it not. It is too sorrowful. Let it be ended. I will speak myself to Robert. It is better he suffer than thee. Come

with me to India. I will make thy life as easy as I can."

Then she kissed him and with many tears and endearments promised to be more cheerful; and said she was grieving most at leaving him and all that had made her life with him so pleasant. But for all these words Paul went out wretched, and half-inclined to put off a marriage which appeared so repugnant to his daughter. "But she did love Robert once," he thought, "and when she is his wife she will love him again—I wonder what her mother would say!" And this thought was an aching wonder in his heart all the morning.

At the dinner hour Thyra was apparently happy. She said Robert had been there; and she had told him what arrangements had been made for the marriage. "And he is dissatisfied, and hard to please," she said; "wilt thou see him and make things plain and straight? Men are so triumphant," she added in a tone of anger; "they get what they desire, and then it is worth nothing unless they glory about it, and ring bells, and twang fiddles, and call every other man and woman to look at the one poor girl they have won a victory over. I won't have any shouting and dancing over my defeat."

"Thou wilt turn thy defeat into a victory, a joyful victory! If I thought different, I would carry thee off from them all. This thing is for thy life's happiness, or thy father would not move a finger in it."

“*Perhaps!*” she replied with a smile, and then she put out her hand, and Paul could not bear the look in her eyes. He arose and went out to find Robert, being not quite certain at that hour whether he would not ask him to put off the marriage until he came back from the Indies. But one word in this direction roused Robert; he would not listen to another delay; he was sure that if they went for a month to Aberdeen Thyra would love him well before it was past. “And when we return,” he said, “*that man* will have left Orkney forever. Paul, if the chance of our happiness were smaller than it is, I would take the risk and win the love that is more than life to me.”

“Thou art a brave man, Robert,” answered Paul. “Meet me here to-morrow morning, and we will saunter toward the manse together. Maran and Thyra will be there soon after ten. Now I must see Barnaby Hay; he is to carry Thyra’s box on board after the ceremony is over.”

“The *Maid* leaves at the noon-hour.”

“I know that. I am not apt to be behind-hand.”

“I am so anxious, Paul.”

“Well, I am anxious, too.”

“Thou art not her lover.”

“I am her father.”

“I love her so dearly.”

“I loved her before thou ’didst; years before thee! Man, Robert! After her mother died she slept in my

breast, and I carried her in these arms, and her life twined itself around my life; and to give her, even to thee, is like tearing our hearts apart. When thou hast a little daughter in thy arms, then thou mayst understand; not till then, Robert!"

"Forgive me, Paul."

Paul nodded assent, and turned away. He had a father's sorrow, and Robert had not a bridegroom's joy. Both men were very unhappy. Paul did not like to go to his dismantled home. Thyra, he knew, was putting away the treasures he valued so much, and otherwise busy about the house, which was to be locked up during their absence; and he feared he could not endure the painful joy of her presence. So he went to the Inn and sat down in his favorite chair by the window. And as he sat there, he noticed a fisherman pass and repass who looked earnestly at him. Presently the man came in, and, sitting down in a chair opposite Paul, said:

"I have something to tell thee, if thou wilt pay me for the news."

"I am not apt to pay for news," answered Paul; "the tongues of Kirkwall will give it to me free."

"Wait a bit. This news is your business. It is about your daughter."

"What is it worth?"

"It is worth twenty pounds now. In a few hours it will be worth nothing at all. It will be too late."

“God help me! What dost thou mean?”

The man was silent.

“What is thy name?”

“Terence Sullivan, master of the *Sea Gull*. I came here for the herring fishing, but I will never come again; these Norse fishers are poor bodies.”

“Where is thy news?”

“Where is thy money? If I am taking my feet out of this place without telling my news, it is sorry enough you will be, and it will be too late then.”

“I have not twenty pounds with me.”

“Get it. I will wait.”

Then Paul went to the innkeeper and borrowed the money. “Here is thy twenty pounds,” he said to Sullivan; “now speak.”

“Faith! you may have the news now, and none too soon. Thyra Varrick is to be married at seven o’clock to young MacDonald. The marriage is to be at Mistress Flett’s house. I and two of my boys, Con and James O’Brien, are to be the witnesses.”

“How dost thou know this?”

“Sure, I am telling you, we are to be witnesses, and moreover my boat is hired to carry them to the mainland by Wick or Thurso. The *Sea Gull* lies now off Flett’s Point; you may see her yourself. We are to set sail at half-past seven. I have daughters myself, and I am heart-scalded to see a good father so wronged as you are like to be. It is little thanks I’m getting for——”

"Thou art getting gold. Art thou lying to me?"

"By Mary! No. The MacDonald's portmantau and your daughter's box of clothing are on the *Sea Gull* now."

"Did the MacDonald pay thee yet?"

"A trifle."

"And thou hast betrayed him! Forsworn thy honor for twenty pounds! How can I trust thee?"

"Let not that set you thinking. Wait a bit, and I will tell you."

"No. There is no time for talk. I see that thou art a man I can buy. If I give thee five pounds more, wilt thou do my bidding exactly?"

"I will do it entirely. God knows my heart is not in the deceiving of a gentleman like you—and a father like myself. What is your will, Captain?"

"Thou wilt not be wanted as a witness, for there will be no marriage to witness. Go back to thy boat at once, and get out of sight as soon as possible. Where are the two O'Briens?"

"Waiting in the dory for me."

Then Paul gave the man five pounds more, saying, "Keep thy word."

"Bad luck to me and mine if I do not!"

"So be it. The deep sea and the devil, if thou break faith with me."

"There is a rogue of a breeze rising, and I will away with it, as soon as the hour strikes seven."

"Why wait till seven o'clock?"

“Because if the *Sea Gull* leaves her moorings MacDonald will be seeing the same; he’s a wonderful suspicious creature.”

Paul nodded and dismissed the man. He felt sure that he would keep his promise, because having already received Hector’s money, and having possession of the effects of the fugitives, there was nothing more to be gained from anyone; and flight was the only safe course for a man so treacherous. For, though Sullivan had been but a few weeks with Norsemen, he had seen enough to convince him they would punish his perfidious, rascally conduct in some way or other.

Paul watched him a moment as he hastened to the shore, and muttering, “Thou scoundrel!” he raised himself with a great effort and looked at his watch. It was then four o’clock, and he knew not where to find Robert. As he went here and there seeking him, his anger gathered until his breath seemed to burn him, but outwardly he was strangely calm. Other wrongs had often troubled the surface of his nature and raised those waves and billows of passion with which he usually met any deception or opposition; but this supreme outrage on his love and trust plowed itself away to the lowest depths of his being and left the surface apparently tranquil and unruffled.

It was six o’clock when he found Robert, and he was then very angry with him. “Thou art off to thy tailor or filling thy stomach always when thou art

wanted," he cried; "and it serves thee well to lose thy bride. If Thyra is worth having she is worth watching. I told thee! I told thee! Now then, MacDonald is to carry her off in our very sight in one hour, and thou wert sleeping, no doubt, while he was getting ready to outwit us both. Not much of a lover art thou!"

Robert made no excuses; he was too anxious to get at the whole truth, and Paul was not slack in telling it. Robert listened like one who hears terrible things in a dream. He had known that Thyra was averse to her marriage with him, but he had not suspected her of such deception. It seemed an incredible thing that Paul was telling him; his soul refused, for a few minutes, to believe it, and when at last the cruel news found credence he spoke heavily, as if the words were too far down the shoal of being to be dragged forth by the tired tongue and trembling lips.

"Come this way," he said to Paul. "My cousin Hakon must go with us. I shall need him."

So they stopped at a small hut on the road to Maran's house, and Hakon, after a few words with Robert, lifted a coil of rope and went with them there. It was striking seven when they reached the place, and Terence Sullivan and Con and James O'Brien were just leaving the house by the kitchen door. Paul and Robert intercepted them, and Sullivan with a cunning leer said:

"He has just been in the kitchen and looked us

over. He said we would be needed in a few minutes. You three can stand in our places. Good luck to you!"

"Thou art a great scoundrel, Terence Sullivan! Thou hast not one decent feeling in thy soul!"

"Ah, then, I have forty-five pounds in my pocket! They stand for decent feelings, well enough."

Paul and the two men with him did not hear the remark. They were at Maran's house. They entered by the kitchen door and saw Hector standing at the foot of the stairs, watching, waiting for his bride. The front door was wide open at his back, and he could have seen Sullivan and the O'Briens if he had turned his face toward it; but all his life was set toward the stairway by which Thyra was coming to him.

In a moment or two he called her impatiently and Paul and Robert heard the hurried movements and broken speech of the women as they answered his impatience. Then their footsteps were in the hall, on the stairs, and there was a cry of joy from Hector, a low laugh and an endearing word from Thyra. Paul strode forward, Robert and Hakon followed, and Thyra saw them and uttered a shriek of terror. It was echoed by Maran, who ran back to her room and bolted the door. But Thyra stood still. She was halfway down the stairs, and Hector's arms were outstretched to receive her, but she stood as still and white as if she had suddenly been turned into marble.

Then Hector faced the intruders. He had heard them coming, but thought only of Sullivan and his men; his eyes were full of Thyra's ravishing beauty; he could see no other thing until her scream and attitude of petrified terror caused him to turn his head.

"Ten thousand devils!" he shouted when he saw Paul and Robert, and his hand went to his dirk. There was murder in his eyes, and Robert spoke to Hakon, and before Hector realized his position he was firmly held by the two strong men. Paul heeded nothing at all of the struggle that followed. The cries, the oaths, the struggles of the desperate bridegroom, what were they to him? His eyes were fixed on Thyra, and her resemblance to her mother angered him. In that very gown of white satin, his darling Ebba had come to him on their wedding-day, and just as his deceiving daughter looked to-day Ebba had looked twenty years ago. He felt that the girl was profaning her mother's memory and her mother's garment. "Come here!" he said in a voice no one ever disobeyed, least of all Thyra, and she made an effort to descend to him. She could not move, and he went forward to assist her. His approach warmed her into anger.

"Let me alone!" she cried. "Thou shalt not touch me!"

"Thou shalt come with me."

"Thyra! Thyra! My love! My wife!" entreated Hector in a voice of more than human grief



HIS HAND WENT TO HIS DIRK.

and passion; "do not leave me! Do not leave me, Thyra!"

She answered him with equal fervor, but Paul would not suffer her to approach the chain in which Robert and Hakon had bound her lover. He was swearing in Gaelic and English, he was mad with rage, he shrieked and struggled, and vowed a thousand deaths to his captors. But he was powerless. Even if he had not been tied so securely—for the men of the sea know how to tie knots—he could not have escaped their grasp and their vigilance. Thyra saw in a moment that all was useless and hopeless, and she straightened herself and tightened her heart for anything. For in her slender form there was a great spirit, one that believed that even in the inevitable, something may be kept back.

"May I whisper five words to Hector?" she asked her father; and he answered:

"Not one."

"Thou art a cruel man. May I kiss him farewell?"

"Thou may not. Little thou cared to kiss thy father or Robert Thorson farewell."

She made a movement, and Paul clasped her hand tightly. "Now thou wilt come with me."

"Let me go upstairs and change my dress. Wilt thou drag me through Kirkwall streets in my wedding dress?"

"I will not trust thee out of my sight and touch,

till I have thee on board the *Indian Queen*. Come!"

"Father, do not shame me before the whole town!"

"It is not I that will shame thee. Thyra Varrick mingled the cup of shame for herself, when she intended it for her father and Robert Thorson."

"Let me put on my blue flannel. I pray thee, grant this kindness to me."

"I will not let thee go upstairs; Maran is upstairs; no man is a match for two desperate women." He took her firmly by the hand and drew her toward the door. She called a piteous farewell to her lover, and he could only sob and cry, and assure her with every oath he could think of that he would follow her to the ends of the earth and marry her. She answered him with a promise of undying love, but he saw her forced from his presence and could not take a step or lift a finger for her rescue.

As soon as Thyra reached the highway she took possession of herself and accepted the position forced on her with silence and dignity. Fortunately it was nearly dark, and the women were mostly busy tidying up their homes after the evening meal. The dusk wrapped her like a veil, but here and there a woman at her door, or a girl going to the public fountain, stared curiously at the couple, and then hastened to some neighbor, to tell what she had seen and wonder at it.

Not a word was spoken by either Paul or Thyra as

they traversed this Way of Shame and Sorrow. Thyra knew it would not help her to complain. If death comes there is nothing to say, and Thyra Var-rick felt that she had died that night. She never could be the same girl again. The house had a deserted look. Everything was covered up and pushed aside, and the dull glow of smoldering peats on the hearth did not light the further corners of the room. Paul locked the door of the forlorn, forsaken-looking home as they entered it and put the key in his pocket. Then he drew Thyra toward the hearth, and when she stood in its lurid light said peremptorily:

“Take off that gown.”

She let the satin skirt fall and unfastened the narrow waist and stood before him in her white slip and petticoat, the very image of desolate womanhood. And he lifted the wedding garment from the floor, kissed it, and threw it upon the burning peat. It was in a blaze in a moment; in five minutes it was ashes. With the face of a tortured spirit Paul watched the immolation; then he turned to Thyra. Her eyes glittered like stars, and she was white as snow.

“Go to thy room,” he said.

She left him without a word, stumbled up the dark staircase, and threw herself upon the denuded bed. She did not cry, even in her solitude; it was not tears that could help her now. No one's life could be more bitter than hers at that hour; it would be inhuman not to pity her. And she needed no one to tell her she

had done wrong; she accused herself without mercy. Her perception of things was clear enough; she could see the very place at which the first wrong step on the wrong road had been taken, and in this time of blaming and excusing she did not blame her father for consequences as much as she did Hector.

"I told him," she moaned; "I told him that Sullivan was false as Satan. I told him every man in that boat was wicked and double-minded. When I first looked in their faces I told Hector they would sell souls or slay bodies for a dirty sixpence. But just because they were Celts they must be trusted. Could he not see the selfish, greedy look of the Celt through their fawning and smiling? I did. Even Maran did. But Hector? Oh, no! They were not Norse, and that was sufficient for him. That ought to have made me think. I was Norse. Why was I better? Only for my beauty? My fatal beauty, that has never brought me anything but envy and ill-will."

When she thought of her father she was amazed that she could not be more angry at him. What was the reason? The reason was, that she understood him, understood his love, his prejudices, his ways of dealing with her. Below all, and through all, and above all, she understood that he most truly loved her; and we are never long angry with those whom we love, whom we understand, and who love and understand us. So it is that we love God. He knows us. He understands us, even afar off. He will not blame

beyond measure, or always chide, or keep His anger forever, just because *He understands*.

Yet in spite of these just concessions she was unconquered. She was resolved to marry Hector MacDonald, no matter how this object was to be accomplished. Right or wrong, she would drag this happiness through the iron gates of pain and disobedience if necessary. Then she began to consider the steps she must take, and, as she thought, Hope stole into her heart and Courage brought a smile to her lips.

"It is this way with my father," she said to herself; "if I submit to him, I conquer him; and I shall find the opportunity, yes, yes—I shall find the opportunity."

Thus she groped among the sorrowful shadows that encompassed her toward the unknown; groped, truly, for uncertain and dolorous are the steps of all who wander from the path of visible right and duty. In this respect Thyra was willingly wrong. Her determination to marry Hector grew out of a willful and wicked sacrifice of the old, true love of her father to the young, untried affection of her lover. Her father had loved her with perfect unselfishness; given her all the fruit of a fatherly, motherly devotion, which could either have lived and toiled, or suffered and died, for her true welfare. Nineteen years had this love filled her cup of life with happiness. She was now willing to spill it on the ground for a stranger whose

handsome face and martial manner had captivated her senses, willing to make a castaway of the old true love for the new love that had never given her anything but promises; a love quite untested, and whose first care had been to separate her from all other loves; a love she must take on its own assurance; without warranty, but the passionate words and kisses of its selfish pleasure. Shame, indeed, to the girl so ungrateful! Shame and sorrow to her who can take from a good father, and then wrong and slander him, and grumble that he has never done enough.

Thyra knew she had been guilty in this respect. It was her fault mainly that the two men had come to hate each other. At the first there had been liking, and in time, if both had been left unprejudiced, they would have understood and respected the differences which divided them. A marriage in such circumstances might have come with good-will and blessing; and Thyra comprehended this night that it would have been better if she had sown good words between them as carefully as she had sown evil ones. What had she gained? A few passing words of pity. And what had they done for her? They had prepared the way for a disrespectful and doubtful marriage; they had separated her from all who loved her; they had wrought a great wrong against her own life, as well as against the lives of others.

Well, then, let her reap the harvest of treachery and ingratitude; let her reap it! In binding these sor-

rowful sheaves she may find the grace of penitence, perchance of pardon.

In the morning Paul called her, and at first she did not answer. Then he said, "Thy blue flannels are outside the door—Maran sent them—and thy breakfast is ready. Come quickly."

In a short time she went downstairs and took her place at the table. Paul made her a cup of tea and put some buttered scone and toasted fish on a plate beside her. "There is no one in the kitchen," he said; "I did the best I could." He glanced into her face as he spoke, and was glad to see that the storm of anger and trouble was apparently over. She ate and drank and answered him when he spoke, and he had a great compassion for her. She was suffering; and, right or wrong, he suffered with her.

At eleven o'clock he said:

"It is time we were on board the *Maid*." And she rose without a word, put on her long, blue flannel cloak and pulled the hood over her head, lifted a little bundle of clothing she had prepared, and took the hand he offered her. She knew there was not the slightest chance of escape; she knew there was no possible hope of moving her father. What then was the use of opposition? Tears and talk were alike ineffectual; she would not so gratify anyone who might be watching her.

As she sat in her cabin listening vaguely to the clamor overhead she heard Robert's voice. He was

in the narrow passageway with her father, and every word they said was clearly audible to her. Perhaps they meant it to be so, for Paul asked plainly:

“What hast thou to say of MacDonald?”

“He has worn himself out with struggling and cursing. At midnight he asked for water, but would not take it from me. I told Maran, and she brought him water, also tea and food. When it is fully one o'clock he will be released.”

“And thou?”

“I shall be far off. He has sworn by his own life to kill me within forty-eight hours. I will not lead him into such sin and danger. I have friends in Stromness, and Stennis, and Wistra, and Sanda. I will keep him moving; he will tire sooner than I. I must live my life day's out; I have love to help me. A man who loves as I do never loses hope. She might come when all likelihoods were over—seventy years hence—at the death hour—love is never too late.”

“God bless thee, Robert.”

“Yes, for that blessing holds all other blessings. And thee, too, Paul! May He go with thee, and stay with thee, and bring thee and—and Thyra safe home.”

The trip to Aberdeen was stormy. It was the fourth day before Paul's watch was over, and Thyra safe on the *Indian Queen*. He gave her his own cabin, and he hired a douce, kindly Scotch woman to wait upon her, buy her such things as were necessary

before sailing, and keep her company during the long voyage. The ship was nearly ready for sea, two more days' loading would fill her cargo, and Paul was not unhappy in the hurry of his last preparations. Proudly he had taken his daughter on board the big, unwieldy Indiaman and introduced her to his officers, and some cadets of great Scotch houses who were going to that wonderful Land of Promise in various capacities, though mostly military. He began to hope at the end of the first day that the voyage might be a pleasant one; and Maggie Hislop, Thyra's hand-maid, was delighted with its possibilities.

"There will be more chances for matrimony here," she said, "than in the big town of Aberdeen itself. I am well content to go with you, lady." And Thyra professed to be equally so. She could see that even in the hurly-burly of the loading and leaving the Scotch cadets were already jealous of her notice; and Paul from his post of observation saw the same thing. "There is safety in numbers," he thought, "and these gay lads will put the other lad out of memory. In a few weeks it will be all right again;" and the happy thought sent him forward to joke, and scold, and hurry onward the hour of sailing. "We may save a tide as like as not," he said.

The *Indian Queen* sailed very early on the third morning, but Thyra did not sail with her. When the breakfast bell rang, she was not to be found anywhere on the ship. Maggie Hislop was fast asleep in

Thyra's cabin, but she had nothing to tell; only, that her lady was sleeping soundly in her berth when she saw her last. She knew nothing more, and with loud lamentings she pitied her own fate, "carried off, as it were in her sleep, to be sold to pagans for a slave. She had no doubt of it."

And the woman's feminine rage shamed and silenced Paul. He became voiceless in his grief and fear. It was as if he had been stricken with death. All the glory was taken out of his labor and his life. There was nothing left for him but endurance; but he had not forgotten how to endure.

He was wretched, but he had no thought of returning to port. Either Thyra was in the sea, or she had found means of leaving the ship. Sometimes he believed one of these things, sometimes the other; sometimes he felt sure that Maggie Hislop had helped her to escape. But this or that, he could not go back in order to satisfy himself. He was on business affecting many others; his duty did not permit him to lose time on his own affairs. He put into Leith to give Maggie an opportunity of returning to Aberdeen.

Then he turned his face away from Scotland. He thought it would be forever. He watched the dear land vanish; he told himself he had seen it for the last time—seen Thyra for the last time. Ah! that took hold of him like the teeth of a wild animal. His heart was like to burst asunder. In the grasp of such a thought he cried out, "*Our Father, which art in*"

Heaven, help me!” For God is the only refuge for a poor father or mother whose child has loved an unworthy man and deserted their home and care for him. For many days Paul had no comforting answer, but one morning, just at dawn, he was nearing the African coast, and he wanted a certain thing, and went to a drawer in his cabin for it. And there was a piece of paper there, lying crosswise with his name on it. It was a last message from Thyra. And he lay down on his bed and wept bitterly, and then fell into a deep sleep. In it he was, doubtless, comforted, for on awakening he took from his breast a small leather case containing a curl of his dead wife’s fair hair, and their wedding ring. He put Thyra’s note with them, and as he did so, said in a voice of one consoled and encouraged:

“He has seen me and pitied me, the good Father in Heaven. He has seen me, and pitied me, that good Brother, Jesus!”

Yes; it is so. No one needs to be desolate. Those who have no helper, God must care for. They are His special charge.

“The old and gray who travel wearily;
All who lack bread;
All who strive and sigh;
Each motherless little one;
Mothers whose little ones are in the sky.”

They know how good is Our Father which is in Heaven! How good, how pitiful, how helpful is the dear elder Brother, Jesus!

CHAPTER IX

Back to the Old Love

WHILE Captain Varrick was struggling through cruel suspense and grief toward the calm of resignation, MacDonald was reaping his share of the evil harvest he had sown. He remained bound in Maran Flett's house until the *Maid of Orkney* had sailed. Then Hakon said:

“Thou may do thy will with him now, Mistress Flett. And thou may send thy servant lass, or go thyself through the town, and tell what has happened. There is nothing to hinder thee.”

So Hakon went his way, and Maran went to the prisoner and cut his bonds, and gave him food and persuaded him to go and rest a while. He was, indeed, exhausted with his eighteen hours' mental and physical struggle, and his hands and feet cramped and numb with their confinement. He had also to consider his plans, and he rested, as Maran wished, for a few hours, endeavoring to collect his faculties and his strength. Only one feeling possessed him—a passionate determination to have a bloody revenge on Robert Thorson.

He was willing to run all risks, and to suffer all

delays for this purpose. He realized that every Norse fisher in the town was his enemy, and that his attack on Robert would have to be sudden and swift. "I must have a boat and helpers," was his first decision. With that thought he remembered that in Peter MacKenzie's boat there were two MacDonalds. He would only have to tell them what wrong and insult he had suffered; they would take fire at the first word—he knew that. It would be three against three hundred, perhaps, but he felt in himself such a force of hatred and anger as would equalize even such disparity. He went that very evening to look for the men. MacKenzie was on the point of sailing for home, but he listened to Hector with intense sympathy, called in Angus and Fingal MacDonald, and the four men bound themselves to hunt Robert Thorson, on the islands and on the sea, till they wiped out in his blood the insult offered to a Highlander and a MacDonald.

Then Mackenzie went to the Inn to find out Robert's most likely place of retreat, and heard that he had gone to Stromness. Immediately the four confederates followed him there, and hence to the isles of Stronsay, Sanday, Eday, Ronsay, and Shapinsay. Robert had always "just left," and Mackenzie's boat in its thwarted chase began to acquire, in the minds of the superstitious men in her, an air of being bewitched and unlucky. They grew silent and unhappy, and though Hector constantly increased the promises

of money, he saw they had a miserable sense of being driven from place to place by an evil destiny that might at any moment destroy them.

After two weeks' unfortunate search the weather became stormy, and they were compelled to put into the grand natural harbor that the Sea Kings called Rorvag. With a shout of joy Hector saw Robert's boat lying there. He anchored, and with his three companions went on board. There was not a soul on her. He cut her loose, and left her to the mercy of the approaching storm and receding tide. Then, leaving Mackenzie and the two MacDonalds to protect their own craft, he went himself over the desolate land to look for his enemy. There were not many huts in sight, and he was sure to find Robert sheltering in one of them. He had purposely chosen to take his revenge alone. No one should share this joy with him. Indeed, he needed no help; he felt the man within him strong as twenty men, and all he wanted was a sight of the rival so detestable in his eyes; then——

“Oh, Fate!” he cried, “give me ten minutes' joy, and I will kill him a hundred times in them.”

This was the uttermost of his desire, for in its passionate intensity it swallowed up all other desires. Even Thyra was outside of the life he was living; he could not yet take her into his mind; he must kill Robert Thorson first—then—then—he would follow Thyra to India, he would follow her over the world,

and out of it. But first, oh, first of all, he must satisfy the lust for vengeance which consumed him. He could not look at his wrists without an intolerable shame. He pitied his own flesh, that it had suffered such indignity, and promised himself to make Robert suffer the utmost torture, if circumstances gave him time so delicately to indulge his hatred. He was always thinking and planning on this subject. It became a kind of insanity with him, so much so that the men, who had at first given him such hearty sympathy, grew afraid of his passionate vagaries. They thought he was fey, and feared him, and regretted that they had enlisted in his service.

His determination to search for Robert alone confirmed their fears. "He is out of his mind; I am not understanding him," said Mackenzie.

"The poor soul has an ill fate," said Fingal MacDonald; and Angus asked in a whisper, "Is it laid on us to share it? No, it is not—there are our wives at home, mournful, tearful, blind with sorrow."

"Aye, aye! And was you seeing what he was like yesterday? And this morning."

"He's bad, indeed."

"Mackenzie likewise; he is wishing to be turning west."

"We are all of us wishing that same thing."

As they talked thus, pensive and superstitious, Hector was going inland, and from hut to hut, cautiously making inquiries. He was directed here, and

sent there, but was always too late. It was the most woeful weather; the sea black and stormy, the land sad, remote, and melancholy, and between earth and heaven a cold, driving rain, with a piercing east wind. The roads were dangerously deep in mud, and water, full of little runlets, of holes, hillocks, bogs, and patches of plowed land that were all mire and water.

But one little hut after another lured him on. In some of them Robert must have taken shelter; his deserted boat was proof of that. He walked hither and thither all day possessed by this idea, and as the darkness came on found himself near Saint Ninian's Howe, the sepulchral barrow of dead men's graves. He had often heard the fishers tell how the Saint entered it, and drove out the evil spirit which had reanimated the corpse of Amund for unnatural strife with the brother he loved. So he did not dare to seek its shelter, though the storm was bitter and the wind blowing so that he could hardly keep his feet.

He looked about uneasily. The road back to the nearest hut was across dangerous bogs, and it was nearly dark; beside which, they had not treated him civilly there. He remembered the woman's face, as she glanced at his outlandish dress, and told him with a hurry of dislike that the man he sought had eaten there an hour previously. "She did not know which way he went;" and with these words she had shut the door in his face. He could go no further until

daylight, and he would not try to ask hospitality from a creature so uncivil and ill-natured. The barrow made a kind of shelter against the wind and rain, and he had with him some oatmeal, and whisky, and a tin mug and spoon. For a moment he thought of going into the barrow, for the entrance was open, and the dead men sleeping there surely would not refuse him a corner to sleep with them. But he was intensely superstitious, and he doubted the good-will of Pictish or Norse wraiths; the wraiths of Highland gentlemen he might have entreated, but in this case it did not take him many moments to prefer the angry elements to the company of he knew not what inimical spiritual forces. So he mixed some meal with water, took a draught of whisky, and, wrapping his plaid well round his breast, lay down to sleep.

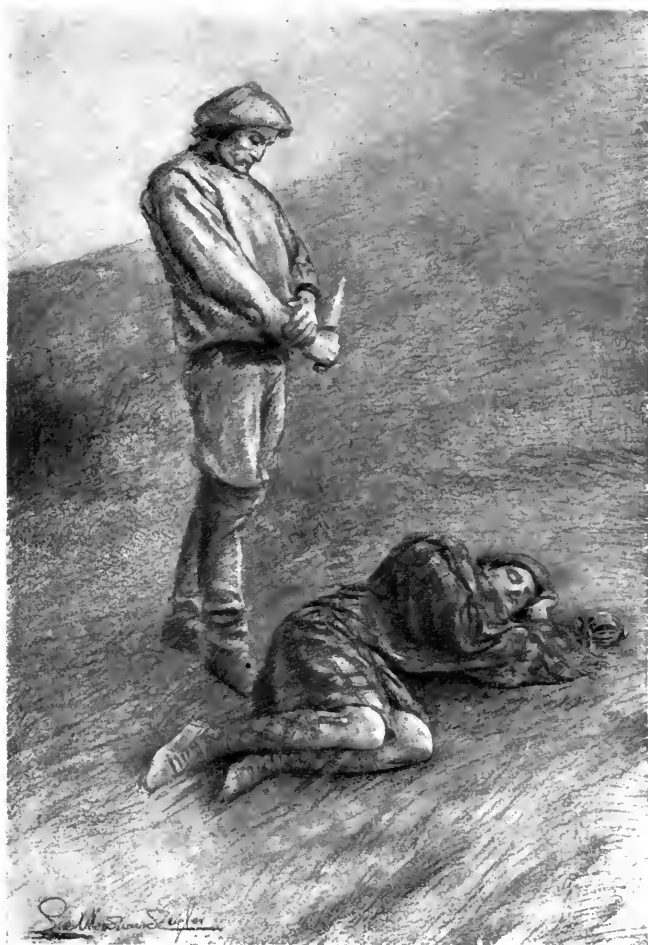
As soon as he lay down he discovered how unnaturally weary he was. His body had been driven beyond itself by his passionate soul; and, the goad being lifted, it fell to the earth, careless of rain and wind, longing only to be at rest. Instantly he was asleep; the winds blew, it rained heavily, it became very cold, but Hector slept, sound and deep; slept far below all feeling or dreaming or caring.

As the dawn came up the rain ceased in a thick fog, and a man came from the barrow. It was Robert Thorson. He had not feared the shelter of this somber sleeping place. He had been in the last hut when Hector called there, and had in the darkness made his

way to the barrow. He was certain that Hector would not dare to enter it, but it was not unlikely the weather might drive him to demand a lodging from the woman in the hut.

He came out of his strange shelter without fear, peering through the mist in the direction of the hut. The woman had promised him a certain sign if Hector was there. There was no evidence of it, so he understood that he might safely return to the human habitation for food. But as his eyes shortened their gaze fell upon the sleeping form of Hector, not a dozen yards away. Robert knew in a moment the man was in his power, and a thrill of savage, pagan joy went through him. He walked up to Hector, and looked fiercely down at this sleeping man who had hunted his life for more than two weeks. The face, seen through the smur and mist, looked strangely unreal, for the soul had retreated below all sense of love or hatred, and revenge was far forgotten. It was only flesh and blood that lay there, prone and unconscious, incapable of its own defense, at the mercy of the man it had been seeking, with relentless fury, to kill.

Robert stood gazing at this helpless figure of his foe. It was the incarnation of all that had troubled and wronged him. But for it he might that hour have been the husband of the dear, beautiful Thyra; and Thyra the mistress of their happy home. Both he and Thyra were fugitive and wretched for its sake. Was there any wonder if the first impulse



THE MAN WAS IN HIS POWER.

which came to Robert was a resolve to put it out of the way forever?

But as he looked in motionless silence at the unconscious man, a feeling of pity came into his heart. He, too, had suffered. Robert could tell by the anguish of his own heart how much he had suffered. And he lay there, at his feet, helpless as a little child. Robert's hand was on his knife; he had but to draw it forth; it would speedily find the life of his enemy. Why did he not do so? Hector was so far off that he did not stir, even under the gaze of living eyes, full of inquisition. His clothing was wet, his right hand lay upon his dirk, his left across his breast, his long, black hair was sodden and dripping with rain. Robert walked away a little. "What shall I do?" he asked himself. "Oh, Christ, what shall I do? Oh, Christ, by thy body and manhood, tell me what shall I do!"

"Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you."

Down the great road leading from the unseen to the seen came these divine words, sweet and strong, and full of power; and Robert walked back and stood again by the side of the sleeping man. He desired to love, and to forgive everything, and as he did so he gazed intently at his rival. There was not a movement. A great silence, a thick mist enveloped them, but into that silence two souls went forth, and spoke to each other, and were sorry for each other, and

there was pity and truce where there had been savage spiritual and carnal warfare.

Robert felt the calming influence; and in that moment discovered that Mercy is Victory; and what a man this discovery made of him! He took his knife from its leather sheath, and, kneeling down by Hector, twined around its sharp point a few strands of his long, wet hair. Then he pushed the knife gently into the sandy earth, and left him without anger; yes, even with that feeling of pity and liking that inevitably springs out of wrongs forgiven.

“When he awakes,” he thought, “he will see that Death has been at his side, and Mercy driven him away. He prevented my marriage to Thyra; I forgive him. I prevented his marriage to Thyra; let him forgive me. Oh, Christ! we are both in thy sight sinful men. Forgive us both.”

Then he went rapidly over the misty moor to the house of a friend who would take him to Kirkwall; for he knew that his boat had been cut adrift, and must have gone to matches on the rocks during the night's storm. And as he walked a determination to leave Orkney came into his heart, and grew stronger with every step he took.

“Why should I stay in Kirkwall?” he asked himself. “Thyra is gone! Paul is gone! So then, I will go to Leith, and I will wait there until I see which way God will send me—north or south, or east or west, it is all the same to me.”

Strong in this resolve he took up daily life again, not planning anything, because he was going to let God plan for him; not unhappy, because he had the joy of accepted self-sacrifice. The thought of Hector no longer poisoned all his springs of pleasure, or filled him with burning chagrin and shameful anger. He had given him life; he could not wish evil upon his own gift, even though he was not sure that Hector would understand his good-will.

Hector did not awaken till the noon-hour. He had slept away all fatigue and fretfulness. For the first few moments he was even buoyant. He stretched out his limbs, and felt life strong in his heart. Suddenly, he remembered his sorrow. Everything flashed across him in a moment. He must rise, and make haste; nothing yet had been done. He would have leaped to his feet, but something held him. With a thrill of terror and an angry exclamation he put his hand to his head, and drew forth the knife. In the impatient jerk some of his hair was cut off, and remained on the blade. He stood up then, took the knife in his left hand, and gazed at it, shocked and spellbound. Slowly a creeping terror passed through him from head to feet, and he whispered to himself:

“It is Robert Thorson’s knife! Here is his name cut in the handle! It was a sailor tied this knot around the blade—this knot of my hair—it was Robert Thorson! He, and no other—he could have killed me, and he did not—he wishes me to know that he will

not hurt me—now, now, I am hand-bound worse than with strong cords. I can do nothing against him—he spared me while I slept. I may as well go back to the boat. I can only give up. Mackenzie, and Fingal, and Angus will see that there is nothing else to be done. I can only give up.” And he was shocked at the indifference this decision came with. Where had all his insane thirst for revenge gone? He could not now kill Robert if he had the best opportunity. He lost the desire to do so. What did it mean?

“What has come to pass?” he asked himself. “What spell is upon me? I will take my feet out of this place, and I will not look behind me. The dead have been here, and the living have been here, and I knew not. What has happened while I slept? Is it a curse, or a blessing, that has been left with me? I will leave this place of sorrow and awful gloom. I will go back to the blessed mountains—to my own home—to my own people. I am hating the sea, and the people of the sea.”

He was mixing his oatmeal as these thoughts passed through his mind, and as soon as he had taken food and drink, he went with hurrying steps back to the boat. Her sails were set, her crew watching for him; in another hour he might have been too late.

“Welcome back, sir!” said Mackenzie. “We were getting ready to search for you. We were going north.”

“Go south,” he answered cheerfully. “Steer for Wick. There I will pay you well, and let you take your own road.”

“Blessing to thee for the good words, MacDonald! We are glad to sail far away from this unhappy place.”

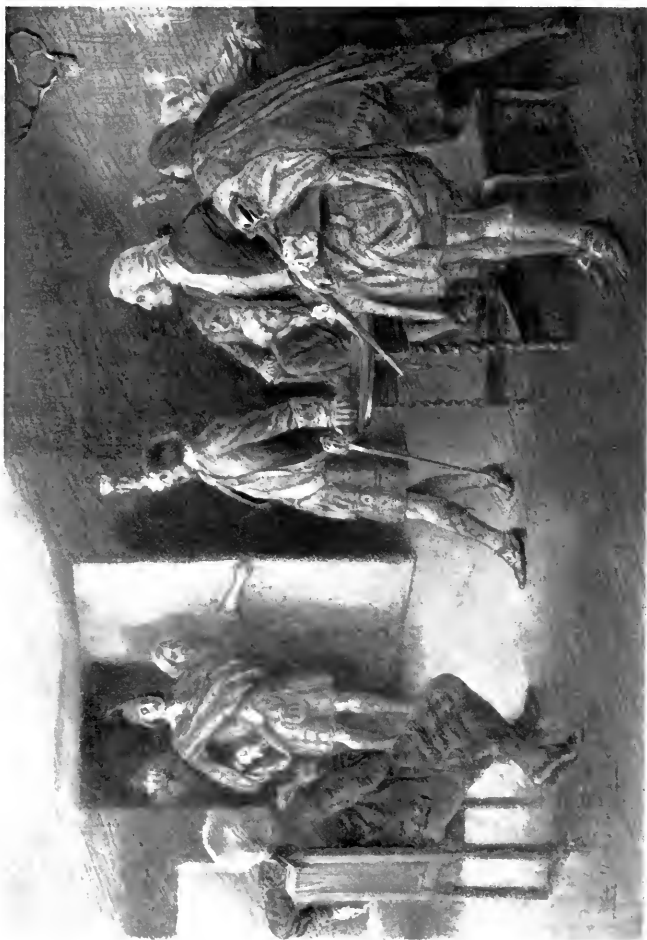
“I have suffered my fate here, Mackenzie. It is over. Now it is Scotland! Scotland forever!”

They understood that he had killed his enemy, and were satisfied. They could now forgive all his previous fey ways and words; he was then driven by his destiny, but as his desire had been given him, he was not under doom, and they could safely, even profitably, do his pleasure. And as if in confirmation of this opinion, a good wind sprang up suddenly, and the boat danced southward with all her brown-red sails set, and the water at her gunwale. A clear, steely sky was above them, and the waves ran high, but the boat was in no trouble; she had kept her own many a time in far worse wind and weather.

Hector held himself in a grim suspense. He could talk of nothing, think of nothing, until he could act out his thought. It was enough that good fortune sailed with them, for when they reached Wick, a ship was just about to leave for Cromarty, and Hector stepped on board her at once. Cromarty was the best of ports for him; it was in the neighborhood of Inverness, and also of Nairn and MacArgall. He was

in fine spirits now, for at Wick he had paid off Mackenzie and the two MacDonalds, intrusting to the latter letters to be delivered to his family; and with their exit from his life, he felt that the last link which bound him, even in memory to Orkney, was broken. Now let the place go to the bottom of the sea! He never wished to hear it spoken of again, never, not as long as his life lasted.

He landed at Cromarty soon after dark, and in a furious rain storm. No matter, he was practically at home, and he knew an inn there, much frequented by Jacobite chiefs and gentlemen, where he was sure of a welcome. He walked with rapid steps toward it, whistling as he went. Before he reached the door he saw the shining of bright lights from the windows, and, as he came nearer, perceived there was much company present. And oh, how good it was to hear once more, the soft, sibilant Gaelic; to see the kilted mountaineers with their picturesque tartans, and their quick movements, and, above all, their talk and laughter, the joyous inspiring dirl and thirl of the bagpipes. He was like to cry for pure gladness, and when the good woman of the house kissed his hands and was like to cry, too, for the gladness of seeing him again, he felt the invincible force of country and race as he had never felt it before. His heart swelled; he seemed to grow taller that he might have room to breathe. She gave him a mouthful and a drink at her own fireside, and then, opening the door of a room



"GENTLEMEN! A MACDONALD."

full of Highlandmen, with an air of conscious pride, called out :

“Gentlemen! *A MacDonald!*”

No more was needed. A score of hands were stretched out to Hector, a score of glasses offered him. He was welcomed with an affection that made his eyes fill. “Now we shall have a good hour,” said the Master of Meldrum, “and first of all, gentlemen, the King’s health.” At these words every man filled his glass, and as they repeated the toast passed it over a bowl of water standing on the table. Hector understood the rite—they were drinking to the King “over the water,” his exalted Majesty, James the Eighth. After this ceremony they began to question him; and he was thus led to talk of his visit to the Northern Islands. In doing so, he magnified both what he had done, and the results to be expected. But the company were in a mood to accept miracles, and to believe in them, and Hector was the hero of the hour. They saw his way-worn garments; he spoke of the far-off places he had visited; and so amid the increasing conviviality he was led to make more and more dubious statements, and to encourage hopes which in more sober moments he would hardly have dared to name.

Now, Meldrum of Inversay was a neighbor of MacArgall, and one of the most enthusiastic of the company present; and by him Hector sent a message to the Chief of MacArgall, and a hurried note to Sara. And he entreated Meldrum to make them understand

that he must go first of all to Inverness for money and clothing, but after these necessities had been attended to he would know no rest until he saw them. Meldrum promised to explain everything. He said he should leave Cromarty at daylight, and would be his willing messenger to MacArgall. And Hector knew well that the impulsive chief would say far more in his favor than he could possibly say for himself.

He left the revelers drinking to the "King over the water" when the midnight came, and he tried to lose himself in sleep. It was impossible. He felt like a man who had been dead and come to life again. The noise, the movement, the snatches of Gaelic and English, the peals of laughter, the sound of the pipes, the whole atmosphere of life and living was so delightful and so natural that it intoxicated him. Yes, even the smell of the whisky and the rizzared haddies was homelike and satisfying. The very thought of Orkney now oppressed him; he called memory away from it. Its calm beauty, its quiet, strong men, its lovely women, all its peculiar life slipped away like a dream. It seemed too far off to remember, and its melancholy remoteness saddened him.

Thyra! Thyra! Yes, he had loved her, and quite unconsciously he used the word "had." He chafed at the memory. Thyra had given him much suffering and humiliation. He had been just a little weary before that shamefully abortive wedding. Now even

the lovely Thyra was an unwelcome thought. She was no longer there to love, no longer there to fight for; she had been taken out of his reach, taken beyond his sight and care. And she did not, in any way, fit into the life he had come back to. He could not imagine her in any of its situations. She belonged to the sea, and outside of her own environment she lost her great charm. In the somber castles of the mountains, and among the chiefs and ladies of the Highland clans, what place could there be for the daughter of the sailor and the sea?

But Sara! Sara was a princess! With gathering armies, or in splendid courts, she was only in her proper sphere. In that hour Sara absolutely deposed Thyra. She was put out of Hector's heart like a usurper whose day was over. He hardly took into his thoughts the lonely girl. "She is hundreds of miles away," he told himself; "she will soon be thousands of miles away. She will be two years, she may be three years, at sea; she may never come back again. She will have forgotten me if she does come back, and can I then tell, or will she tell me, what other lovers she has had in my place?" There was no pitiful love, there was not even loving pity for her. It was pity for himself he felt; for Thyra it was but waste remembrance and surmise. He did not even wonder how this could be; he was content to feel that it was so. Happily, he was going back to his old love, not caring to cast one thought into the shadowy distance

which hid from him the new love, fugitive and forgotten.

He resolved to make the past summer as if it had never been. During it his destiny had always been asleep; nothing had progressed, nothing had taken place. It was a mistake—a dream from which he had fortunately awakened. Yet in spite of his assurances of satisfaction there was a pain in his heart he could not always be rid of; for, say what words we like, it is a bitter feeling “when the dear thing is no longer dear, and the sacred thing is no longer sacred.”

In the morning the company had melted away before Hector came from his room, and he was pleased that it was so. He was anxious to reach Inverness, and replenish his purse and his wardrobe, and he knew that Meldrum and others would prepare the way for him at MacArgall. Indeed, Meldrum was delighted to have the news to carry. He went some miles out of his way to take it; and nothing suffered either in his imagination or in his relation of events. And he was no niggard in praising Hector when he saw how grateful his praises were to the beautiful Sara MacArgall. He divined the love affair, and he did his best to encourage it.

“He is the bravest and prettiest lad my eyes have seen for a long time,” he said with enthusiasm. “Think of him wearing away the long summer days, and nights, too,—for they are all the same there, he

is telling me,—gathering men for the Prince. He was naming the places and the men, but the names are strange, and not easy for a Highland gentleman to be taking in his mouth; and the men fishers, and the like of that. But he was reminding us that Montrose was leading two thousand of them to fight for the first Charles; and that half that number would be a Godsend to us in the spring; they being big men, strong, and good in fight. So he was going from place to place trysting them; and he is believing there will be at least one thousand men at Thurso next April to meet him. A good lad! A brave lad! A handsome lad, too, even among Highlanders, who are, God knows, every one of them, men worth looking after.”

Thus the road was made broad and straight for the return of Hector to MacArgall, and one glorious autumn day, in all the splendor and light-heartedness of new clothing and a replenished purse, he again saw the old gray castle, and felt the warmth and joy of the true love that welcomed him. The family were on the point of deserting their home, but stayed their preparations to rejoice over Hector's return, and rearrange their plans. And what a dream! What a happy dream was this one delayed week! It was as if every soul had agreed to put aside any thoughts but those of love and pleasure. The beautiful Sara had never been so radiant and affectionate; the chief never so hopeful and trusting; Revan never so

brotherly and confidential. And over all was the soft, modified sunshine of the departing year, and the crisp mornings and nights heightened by blazing fires, and enthused by song and story from the past and splendid hopes of the future.

It seemed now incredible to Hector that he had ever voluntarily deserted a life so in consonance with his nature and his desires; it was still more incredible to remember that but a few weeks ago he had even thought of it with distaste, yea, had refused even to think of it at all. And Thyra? Thyra was now only part and parcel of an experience he wished to blot from his memory. And if he remembered her it was always to recall some incident in their love which had mortified or angered him; memory refused to bring him back any one of the hours which her beauty and affection had made at the time so heavenly. Above all, he felt as acutely as in the hour of his real misery those humiliating cords with which Robert and Hakon had bound him.

For Thyra's sake he had been compelled to endure the indignity, and at this interval it was on Thyra he laid the blame. Men may suffer such things for women, but they do not forgive the necessity. At the last it is the woman herself who has to suffer. For it is in this case, as it is when women compel proud men to sue too humbly for their favor—at the wooing time, they may fall on their knees, but when they do get up—they go away forever.

Always a favorite at MacArgall, Hector had never been in such favor as at this period. His evident distaste to talk of his Orkney experiences was only another reason why he was to be admired. Sara and Lady Gordon discovered "that, like all brave men, he was modest." Chief Murdo said, "The lad is very prudent, and no boaster, and he is not putting much faith in these Norsemen; why would he?" Revan, at first a little dubious, accepted his friend at his own words after a short conversation which came one night quite unpremeditated between them. They had been speaking of the Islands, and of what troops might reasonably be expected from them, and Hector had plainly shown Revan that his hopes were feeble and uncertain.

"Did you see Captain Varrick?" Revan asked. "He served the King once."

"He served him as a matter of business, and he lost a ship, and a large sum of money, by the transaction. He would not listen to a word I said which looked to further employment in the cause."

"Did you ever see his daughter?"

"Often; I lodged with Captain Varrick's cousin, and Thyra Varrick was frequently at her house. Also I was at the Captain's house many times."

"She is a beautiful woman;" and Revan sighed at the memory of her loveliness.

"Yes," answered Hector, "yes, she is beautiful—in her way."

"What do you mean, Hector? I think no woman could be more beautiful. I am sure that you were in love with her. It would be a miracle if you were not."

"You are right, and also wrong, Revan. I was amazed and delighted when I first saw her. I thought, for a little while, that a man might well give up all other good things to win such a woman's love. But I will tell you, Revan, that no gentleman could finally accept such a renunciation; or, at least, to do so, he must have been born in the same surroundings as this paragon of flesh and blood. Very soon I wearied of her peculiarities. You see, I had been bred on the heather and the mountains, Thyra on the tangle and on the sea. I am of noble birth, Thyra Varrick—though her father is rich for his station—is of the common people, and she has their atmosphere and odor. When I sit by the side of Sara, when I watch her sensitive soul make eloquent her exquisite face, when I see her coming to meet me clothed like a princess, perfumed like a flower, around her the air of courts and camps, and centuries of romance behind her, the other girl is like her handmaid. I would not take them, at the same moment, into my consciousness."

"You say too much, you go too far, Hector. There is something as truly like a princess in Thyra Varrick as in Sara MacArgall. She won my heart at a glance, and when these troubles are over I am

going to Kirkwall to see if I can win her love. I will make her my wife if I can."

"Revan, you will not succeed. There is an unconquerable prejudice against the Gael in the Orkneys, and, moreover, the girl is engaged to a Norse fisher and sailor, who is the partner of her father."

"But she is not married?"

"No. She is with her father at sea. She may be two or three years away; but when she comes back, she will marry this man. I am sure of it."

"And you do not care?"

"Not at all. I think they will be happy."

"I see. You are not in love with her."

"I am in love with Sara. I have no love in my heart that is not hers." And he spoke so frankly, and with such an air of invincible truth, that Revan was obliged to believe him, and also glad to do so; for, this point settled, he was willing to concede to Hector all the good qualities with which Sara and Lady Gordon invested him.

They took seven days' pleasure together at Mac-Argall, and in all these days there was not a cloud. Sara's heart was full of love, and her throat full of songs, as Hector wandered with her over the hills and down the strath, talking, laughing, singing the happy hours away. And round the table and about the hearth they planned how the winter was to be spent. Before Hector's arrival it had been arranged that the Chief should go to Inverness, the center of all move-

ments made for the Stuarts, and that Revan, after seeing his aunt and sister safely installed in Lady Gordon's house in Edinburgh, should pass the time between Edinburgh and Inverness gathering information, and keeping the clans posted as to events, and ready for immediate action. Hector's arrival changed these arrangements. It was resolved that he should attend Lady Gordon and Sara to Edinburgh, and be the bearer of any important news to the faithful waiting at Inverness; leaving it to Revan to disseminate it among the loyal clans through the Highlands. These plans were at best elastic and undecided, but nothing more definite could be predicted with the Stuarts as their foundation. For it was the bad fate of this unlucky family, not only to be wavering and uncertain in their own conduct, but also to be dependent on people and circumstances still more so. It was not reason and intelligence that planned for the followers of Prince Charles; they had most of all to lean upon their faith.

It was in this living power the little party left their home one frosty morning in September. Chief Murdo rode with them,—a glorious Gael on a mighty black horse,—his ample jacket shining with silver buttons, his plaid belted round him, his Highland bonnet waving lofty plumes, his enormous claymore flashing in the cold sunshine. One hundred of his clan attended him, all young warriors in the very flower of their manhood. The ladies were in the carriage, but frequently

Sara chose to ride a few miles at Hector's side, and then Revan took her place as companion to his aunt. At Inverness the party separated, and the weather became wet and gloomy, so that the ladies were glad when the journey was over, and they entered Gordon House in the Canongate of Edinburgh.

Here life quickly arranged itself to that splendid, orderly routine Hector loved. He fell immediately into communication with the Jacobite party, and was their trusted emissary on many important missions. And his comings and goings marked time to the two brave ladies who loved him; his wishes governed them, his presence brought sunshine to them, and when the exigencies of the cause led him away, Lady Gordon watched for his return as a mother watches for her son; and the beautiful Sara, with the long, tender thoughts of a love deeper than the sea—a love waiting with hope and joy for those events which Destiny held in reserve, and which she insisted on believing could only be happy ones. Was she not wise? Yes; for the heart of God is touched by our smiles as well as by our tears.

So the winter passed happily away. Edinburgh, always a military city, was especially so at this time. Its romantic streets, dominated by the most ancient castles, were full of soldiers; the nobility of the Lowlands were in their stately homes in the Canongate and the vennels and closes called after them; and everywhere Highland chiefs, with "followings" in

their peculiar tartans, crowded the narrow causeways, and kept them noisy with their quarrels and dirkings for precedence. No city in the world was more full of sentiment and romance; none more gayly picturesque; none more on the outlook for adventures and military movements. The most ordinary lives went to the blare of trumpets and the dirl of pipes, the waving of flags, and the pomp and show of flashing weapons in the hands of nobles and martial men. And when night came, the streets were full of link boys, and of lackeys carrying sedan chairs, and the great houses of the nobles were alight from end to end, and in their rooms the sounds of mirth and the strains of music, and the beat of dancing feet. Sara MacArgall was well known in such scenes, and many a fair woman envied her the devotion of the handsome MacDonald.

In truth, no handsomer young chieftain trod those streets of enchantment. Wherever he went the eyes of beauty rained influence on him; and even the fisherwives stopped their calls to give him a compliment or a mouthful of merry words. He was so happy and radiant in his youth and love, so proud and brave in his carriage, so tall, so graceful, so superbly dressed, so palpably armed, so demonstratively the hero of which men and women dream. And this was the life for which he was fitted; it was as much in him and of him as the grain is in and of the wood of a tree. If ever he now thought of Thyra, it was to wonder what witchery she had possessed to keep him captive four

long months amid scenes so directly opposed to all the things which were as the breath of life to him.

But it was rarely, indeed, he permitted Thyra a moment's resting-place in his memory. "She is so far away," he said to himself; "I shall never, never see her again! Never again!" He was coming up the Canongate one afternoon in the spring of 1746, permitting but not encouraging such thoughts. The street was crowded, the sun shining; there was the sound of trumpets in the air, the flower girls were offering handfals of primroses and daffodils; life was in the most vivid social and military coloring. And yet his soul, perversely insistent, would recall to him that small gray house by the gray North Sea and the lovely girl in her bride dress coming smiling down the little stairway to meet him—and then that terrible humiliating sequence!

He threw up his head impatiently and sought some outlet for his tormenting thoughts. A regiment of English soldiers was marching up the street; a mob of boys and women keeping pace with it, crowding the narrow causeway and filling the air with their banter and scoffing. He had no wish to be jostled by this noisy company, and he stepped backward into the embrasure of a shop door he was about to pass. He would have preferred to go in, but he saw it was a drapery shop for the sale of women's fineries, and so he did not enter.

And the soldiers passed, and the crowd with them,

but he did not realize their passage. Do as he would, the vision Memory flaunted him with, and even the music of the marching men set itself only to that woeful iteration, "Never again." He was finally forced to speech. "She is thousands of miles away," he said passionately. Then, stamping his foot, he strode onward.

And Destiny smiled sarcastically after him. For within touch, with only a closed door between them, sat Thyra Varrick. She was slowly fingering some soft woolen thread and waiting for the crowd to pass; but had she opened the door to go out, or Hector opened it to come in, they had met upon the threshold.

CHAPTER X

Thyra Varrick Runs Away

IF Destiny had only opened that unlocked dividing door! If Hector had turned his head as he walked down the street, and seen Thyra following in his footsteps! If a friend had detained him at the turning, just for three minutes, until she had reached the same point, what would have happened? Let those divine, who understand the heart of a youth as fickle as he is susceptible. To Thyra it would have been only a natural and happy event. She would have had no embarrassing circumstances to chill or perplex her joy; no doubts and no uncertainties to take into her consideration. As she had loved Hector when willing to abandon everything for him, so she loved him at that hour; and she would have met him with an affection that he would have felt to be embarrassing, perhaps even mortifying.

For in her heart he still reigned as supreme as on that wretched day when she had been forced to sail with her father in the *Maid of Orkney*. Those who thought her calm, tearless mood expressed resignation to her duty were much mistaken. She was even then assuring herself that there must be an outlet

from a fate she so passionately denied; since the things that befall us, which are irrevocable in their nature, are usually of our own breed, the outcome of our own desires or actions.

“I shall be quiet until we reach Aberdeen,” she said to herself; “there I have two days, and something, perhaps even some person, will show me the way out of this trouble.”

One thing was certain, she must escape from the *Indian Queen* at Aberdeen. In the meantime she assumed to perfection that air of sad obedience which was always omnipotent with her father. Her pathetic submission touched him almost to tears, and the hiring of a woman to wait on her, and his generosity regarding her necessities for the long voyage, were the outcome of the respect which her tearless, uncomplaining sorrow roused in him.

Nevertheless, her feet had no sooner touched the deck of the *Indian Queen* than she began to look around for some deliverer. The first day brought her no hope. The hired woman she fathomed at once. She was neither prudent nor reliable. At the last moment she might, through fear or prospect of reward, fail her. She could use her only as a means to allay suspicion or to give voice to her resignation. But she kept courageously on the alert, for she was intensely aware of some inner force which would have its will not only over the men, but over the events by which she was environed. She was conscious of it as

she was of her sight, without question or analysis, which, indeed, was far beyond her nature or experience.

Just at dusk on the second day, she saw go to the wheelhouse a man whose face and carriage seemed familiar to her. She followed and, when he turned, recognized him.

“Art thou here, Matthew Saxby?” she asked joyfully; and the roughly clad giant stretched out to her his great hands.

“I saw thee when thou camest on board,” he said; “but I feared thou hadst forgotten me.”

“Thou art not kind to say that. Does a girl ever forget the lad who sat on the school bench beside her? Many a strapping thou took for me in those days.”

“It was a joy to me. I could not have borne to see the tawse leave its red mark on thy little white hand.”

“Matthew,” she said, stepping close to him and laying her little white hand in his, “I am in great trouble, in sore trouble, and thou canst help me again—if thou wilt.”

“I will do anything a man may do for thee. What is thy trouble, Thyra?”

“My father wants me to marry Robert Thorson, and I do not want to marry him. Thou must remember Robert?”

“When I want to. I never liked him. He licked me once, when I was a lad of twelve, for cutting a

fish net. It was none of his net. I have not forgotten; if I can help thee against him right glad will I be."

"I don't want to marry him, Matthew."

"I should think not. He is ten years older than thee—and not a nice man."

"And because I will not marry him, father is taking me to sea, so that I may marry no one else. And I am afraid of the sea, and I do not want to go to India."

"It is a shame to take thee into such danger. Why, my dear lass, there might come an hour when those who loved thee best would know the greatest kindness would be to kill thee with their own hands—pirates and what not—whatever is Captain Varrick thinking of?"

"He is angry at me. I want to get off the ship, Matthew. I must, I must; how can I manage it?"

"What wilt thou do if I put thee on shore?"

"I have money, and I will go back to Kirkwall and stay with Maran Flett till my father comes home. He will forgive me then."

"Well, then, to-night I will go and see the wife of my brother Ben. She is a Scot, but kindly; and I will tryst her to the wharf at half-past four on the morning that we sail. That night I shall be in command of the lower deck, and I will not lift the gangway. To-morrow thou must find out the best way to reach it, and be thou there at that hour and I will

take thee across and my sister-in-law will see thee safely to her house, and there thou canst safely stay until some boat is leaving for Orkney."

"Thou art as kind as ever. What shall I do for thee?"

"Thou shalt let me kiss thy hand; I shall be well paid."

"This is the hand thou savedst from the tawse, often; kiss it, Matthew; and I will never forget thee."

"I am right happy," he said, bending his big-bearded face to the slim hand lying in his own: "and now thou hadst better not speak to me again. I can tell thee with a look, or a bend of my head, if it is all right with my sister. How best to reach the lower gangway from thy own cabin, that thou must find out for thyself. Only be true to time. The captain will be at the gangway about five o'clock. It is our final lading, and there will not be much of it."

"I will be there. Fail me not, Matthew."

"Thou mayst trust me."

When events are to happen they may be safely left to their own coercion. The plan so easily laid was as easily carried out. At four o'clock Thyra rose and at the gangway found Matthew waiting. He took her hand without a word and led her safely to the open pier. There was a woman with a shawl over her head waiting there, and Matthew said to her:

"Here is the lady; see thou art kind to her, Maggie."

He turned with the words, but Thyra stayed him with a touch and, frankly lifting her face to his, said, "Kiss me good-by, Matthew Saxby; for thou hast been my true friend." And he kissed her and went hurriedly back to the ship, and ere they had gone many steps the two women heard him shouting orders to the crew gathering at the gangway.

Swiftly and silently Thyra and her companion went through the fair sleeping town to a small house in the fishing quarter; and once inside, Mistress Ben Saxby threw off her shawl and began to talk.

"Eh, but thou art a brave lass," she said; "and all for true love! That goes to my heart. I am for true love always. Thou must tell me all about it, for it isn't likely thou art running away from one lad, unless there was another thou liked better. Come, let us have a cup of tea, and then thou canst get a few hours' sleep; I'll warrant it is needed. And maybe it will be close keeping for two or three days—it might happen someone came looking for you—least-ways that is what Matthew says."

Thyra needed no one to remind her of this possibility, and for three days she sat silent, listening for the voice and step she feared. It did not come, and then she was shocked at its absence. All at once it struck her that she was but one of many interests, even to the two men who, she believed, loved her better than anything else. For she had hoped, she had been certain, that as soon as Hector was re-

leased he would find some way to follow her. He had plenty of money, there were boats at hand, they were delayed two days in Aberdeen; she felt that he ought to have overtaken them and have been on the pier, watching the *Indian Queen* for her. Then, much as she had wronged her father, she had an abiding trust in his love. She was sure he would not go away, without some inquiry as to whether she was alive or dead. And both Hector and her father had put other things before her—Hector what he doubtless called his “honor,” and her father what he believed to be his “duty.” She was humbled beyond belief by these considerations. For the first time in her life she had come to a place where Thyra Varrick was not the most important factor in events concerning herself.

She felt an unspeakable desolation, and on the fourth day gave herself up to unrestrained weeping. Her attitude soon gave great annoyance to her hostess. She was one of those foolish women who are always planning for what they consider “a good time.” Her house was a favorite resort of young sailor lads and of some pretty, thoughtless girls of Maggie’s temperament. And though there was not the slightest breach of any moral question, there was loud singing and rough and ready joking, and foolish laughter, and noisy, vulgar wooing and bantering. Every instinct of Thyra’s nature was offended by these things; she made constant efforts to evade Mag-

gie's company, and she gave serious offense in so doing.

"Proud little cutty!" Maggie said to one of her cronies. "I have stood more than enough of her airs. She is that close, too, she tells me nothing at all."

"The sense of the creature! and she so young!"

"What are you saying, Jean Carter? Nobody likes living with a secret in their honest house. I'll not thole it much longer. If her life were well looked into, it would be the proper thing. Ben said she was running away from a great wrong; but suppose she was running away from her husband or the police! I would be just distracted with the disgrace!"

"She is an extraordinary bonnie woman."

"Do you think that?"

"The lads all think so."

"Lads are mostly fools. She is too pale-faced for me, and she has no perception anent a joke, and then the stiff lady-ways of her are perfectly ridic'lus."

"Maybe she is a lady."

"Not she! I am knowing real ladies when I see them—nothing at all to her back but a blue flannel gown and cloak. She may be a circle, or half a circle, above you and me, but she is none too good for the decent folk she meets here. Lady, indeed! She would cut a poor flourish among ladies! I heard your man was off on one of his spells again. What are you doing about it?"

"Nothing at all. A drunk man is far beyond

any mortal management. The deil has him in tow, and I'm not fool enough to try and take a job out of his hand. He'll come home, sick and sorry, when the Old One has had his will with him. I would let the poor lassie have her own way, if I were you, Maggie. She knows best where she wants to go."

From this conversation it may be easily understood that Thyra was not happy. She was, in the very nature of things surrounding her, unable to please. Her beauty set her apart, her speech, peculiar and refined, offended; and her suggestive silences were still more offensive. Her presence bred restraint and silence and made the noisy house, as Maggie said, "more like a kirk than a cheerful body's house place." At the same time her absence caused comment and wonder and gave ill-natured neighbors opportunities for saying spiteful things.

In three weeks Thyra felt that she could not stay any longer with Maggie Saxby. But where must she go? Her youth, her great beauty, her absolute friendlessness, were all against her making a home of her own, however humble it might be. "I should be ill-spoken of whatever I did," she thought hopelessly. And what could she do? In those days the occupations for women were pitifully few and bare. But Thyra, whose mother had been a Shetlander, had the wonderful skill in knitting displayed by these Norse women. She could spin wool into a thread as fine as the finest linen, and knit a shawl with it that vied with the most

delicate lace. But where and with whom could she find a quiet home in which to sit still and do her work? She had some money, but not enough for the necessities of two years. Somewhere she must go; some kind of work she must do. With a heartsick anxiety she asked herself, "Where?" and "What?" Let no one imagine her trouble was a light one; in such common events of daily life there is far more real tragedy than in battles and heroic adventures. The girl felt herself to be outside of human love and help, and it made the sense of her isolation no lighter to admit that she herself was to blame for it.

But even while acknowledging this fact she was rallying all her soul's forces. Out of its mysterious strength and wisdom surely some guiding voice, some leading intuition, must come. In following this instinctive reliance on something beyond herself, she was merely accepting one of those instantaneous decisions that some unknown side of human reason governs. Not a foolish way, because between this world and the world invisible there are myriads of intimate concordances, and that soul must be deaf and dumb and blind that cannot in an emergency come in contact with some sympathetic intelligence. In Thyra's case the message received was, doubtless, regulated by influences so obscurely rooted in her nature, and beyond her life, as to defy any ordinary analysis. It was remarkable only for its simplicity and directness: "*Go and see Mr. Reid.*" Of course, that was what

she ought to do. She was amazed that she had not thought of it before. Instantly she rose to her feet, erect, purposeful, flushed with a new-born hope. "I will go at once," she answered; and there was in her countenance and bearing the grace of a ready obedience, the reverence of one who salutes *Presence* unseen but fully recognized.

She passed out of the house unchallenged, and on the street she asked a man to show her the offices of Thomas Reid. A large granite building was pointed out, and on the steps of it an old sailor was standing.

"Wilt thou tell me how to get speech with Mr. Reid?" she asked.

"Go straight along this passage, my lass, and chap at the door at the end of it; and if the master is within, he will say 'Open the door.'"

Without further inquiry she did as directed, and to her somewhat timid summons a voice answered promptly, "Open the door." And as she did so she threw back the hood from her head and stood within the darksome place, a sweet, bright vision of womanly loveliness. The great shipping-master was astonished at such a visitor and, unaware to himself, strangely influenced by the girl's manner and beauty. He rose and lifted a chair forward, but Thyra only rested her hand upon it, as she said:

"I am Thyra Varrick; Captain Paul Varrick's daughter."

"He told me he was taking his daughter with him."

"I ran away from the ship two hours before she sailed. I did not wish to go to India. I was afraid. I had heard about the pirates,—and the other dreadful things,—so I ran away."

"But why, then, did you leave Kirkwall?"

"I was forced to do so. My father wanted me to marry Robert Thorson, and I did not want to marry him. It was Robert or my father, and I chose the ship before the man—I could run away from the ship."

As she spoke she gathered courage, her face flushed, her eyes glowed; she was the loveliest incarnation of a woman, willful and resolute. Reid could not help a smile. "I see," he answered. "You are certainly Captain Varrick's daughter. Now, what more is there? It is nearly three weeks since the *Indian Queen* sailed."

"A sailor on her, who comes from Kirkwall, and who had been my school-fellow, took me off the ship, and I have been staying with his sister, Maggie Saxby."

"Saxby? Yes, I know the woman."

"I am not happy there. She is not unkind, but—but I do not like to be there, sir, and I want thee to find me a quiet home where I can work and make a little money and live decently until my father comes back. He will forgive me then."

"How do you know that he will forgive you? Paul Varrick is a dour man."

“There are two I do not fear to ask forgiveness from—God and my father. Both of them understand; I’ll need to say nothing to either but ‘I am sorry.’ Paul Varrick is a kind man.”

“Well, Miss Varrick——”

“Thyra, please, sir.”

“Well, Thyra, I know the very home for you, but you will require to go to Edinburgh.”

“I should like that well, sir. And what could I do there?”

“You would go to my sister, who is married to one of the great lords there. They have a little lad, the heavenliest little lad I ever saw. But he is a cripple, Thyra; and he suffers, at times, beyond human help or understanding. More often he is free from pain, and then no one is more eager for knowledge; more fain to hear of the world and the life and the stir of it. Poor, wee Donald! I think you could be a fine friend and companion to him; you could read to him, and talk to him, and tell him about the sea; and, maybe, when he cannot sleep for pain, you would wake the long nights with him and make them easier to bear. His father loves him beyond all things, and his mother is kind in her way, too; but she isn’t the mother that bore him—only a stepmother—and she has a big house to look after; and more company to keep than is believable, and so the wee laddie is often his lone self, or with sleepy, selfish servants, which is, maybe, worse. Do you think you could love the poor suffering bairn?

Do you think you can help him, as his weary feet stumble heavenward? ”

“ Oh, sir, I would take joy in doing this thing! My heart is gone to the boy already. I am just waiting thy word, sir. I can start for Edinburgh this hour—if it is thy will.”

She spoke with feverish desire, and Mr. Reid turned to his desk and wrote a letter, which, he said, would be her guarantee and make her welcome. “ There is a boat sailing from Leith in three hours,” he said; “ and I will send a proper person to put you in her skipper’s care; and when he knows you are Paul Varrick’s child he will be like a father to you. I’ll warrant you are safe in Lady Fraser’s house ere he loses sight of you; and have you money enough, Thyra? I have money belonging to your father——”

“ I thank thee, sir; but I will not touch my father’s money.”

“ There will be need of nice clothing and such things.”

“ I shall dress for the little lad, sir; and he will hardly notice if I be in gray winsey or gray satin.”

“ Won’t he? You don’t know Donald yet.”

“ I have some money, sir; quite enough.”

“ Then good-by, Thyra! I will send to Maggie Saxby’s for you in an hour’s time, and, when I have an opportunity, will let Captain Varrick know that you are in my care, and better so than on the high seas with him.”

“I thank thee again, sir. When I came to thee I took a good road.”

“Who told you to come to me?”

“I know not; there was a voice in my heart. I heard it,” and she looked for a moment at the man to whom she had been sent, and learned all there was to learn. A profound certainty of his truth and goodness assured and comforted the lonely girl; she knew that she might go to Edinburgh or anywhere else safely on his word. She knew it, because women know what men do not know; because they still hold in their hands a divining cap.

Over the old sailor she had exercised her usual charm. He left her with a pain in his heart, and a grumble at his friend Varrick. If I had a daughter like yonder lass! If God had only given me a daughter like her, she wouldna be going with strangers through Edinbro’s streets, while I roamed the Indian seas for a handful of siller. God save the lassie!”

The lassie herself had no fears. She was in a state of great elation. The splendid room in which she was waiting for Lady Fraser filled her with wonder and delight. The soft carpet and velvet hangings, the wide hearth with its blazing fire of coal, and its snow-white rug, the luxurious chairs, the ornaments of silver and bronze, these things were full of interest; though it was the pictures on the walls that captivated her. She knew nothing at all of pictures, but there was a large oil-painting of John Knox

preaching, before which she stood spellbound, enthused and worshipful. Indeed, she was not aware that she had been waiting nearly half an hour until Lady Fraser came in with many apologies for her delay. She had her brother's letter in her hand, and she looked from it into Thyra's face with a kindly curiosity.

"You are welcome beyond measure, Miss Varrick," she said; "indeed, you are. What do you need most of all? Is it food, or rest?"

"I am needing nothing. I had a good passage, and a good friend on board. Whatever I can do, I am ready to do at once."

"Then we will go upstairs, and I will introduce you to the little lord—he kens all his dignities, does Donald." As she spoke she went to a large mirror and shook out her satin gown before it, looking at herself approvingly, and then, turning with a smile to Thyra, "Donald is wonderfully fond of fine clothes," she said; "and so I aye show myself to him when I am dressed by ordinar." And it pleased her to see that Thyra looked at her from the plumes in her hair to the diamond buckles in her satin slippers, with distinct and flattering admiration.

They went up the stairway together and for a moment paused at a door ere Lady Fraser opened it. It was so heavy and moved so noiselessly that the occupants of the room were not immediately aware of intrusion; and in that instant's pause Thyra got her

first glimpse of the little lad she was to love so well. He was reclining on a sofa, and his father sat by his side with a book in his hands. Evidently he was reading aloud, but when Lady Fraser entered the interest was instantly diverted. The judge made her a low bow, and Donald called out, "Eh, my lady, but you are braw and bonnie to-night!"

"And only see what I have brought you, Donald. A young lady who is to be all your own friend—a young lady all the way from the Orkney Isles—and she ha' come to be with you—your own friend—until you are strong enough to go to school again."

Both father and son were watching Thyra as Lady Fraser made this little speech of introduction. And Thyra was watching the lad. She was looking at him eagerly, tenderly, her eyes radiating her sympathy, her mouth sweet with smiles. The child was the first to speak. "Come close to me, my bonnie lady," he said to Thyra; "for I canna well come to you." Then Thyra threw off her cloak and slipped down on her knees beside him; and he stroked her cheeks with his thin hands and touched her bright hair, until with a sudden joyous daring he took out the large confining comb and laughed to see it fall rippling and curling over her shoulders.

"If you had wings and a white gown, you would look like an angel," he said. Then she laid her face against his face and kissed him, and he laughed again and said, "Father! father! I'll not be needing you

any longer to-night. I have my guardian-angel! You may go with my lady to the Gordon House and watch her win Georgie's men and Charlie's men, and wonder at the wit and wisdom of her. I want my dinner here,"—then, speaking to Thyra—"you will have a mouthful with me, eh, dearie?"

There was some further conversation, and some directions as to the room which Thyra was to occupy, and then she was left alone with her charge. For a few minutes there was silence between them. The boy looked at Thyra attentively, and she looked at him. He was about nine years old and preternaturally wise and clever. His eyes were large and full of soul; and his white face had in excess that seraphic expression often noticeable on the faces of those suffering from spinal disease. There was a pair of little crutches by the sofa, and he glanced at them and said, "I'm nothing but a lameter! You'll hae to have a deal o' patience with me—what must I call you, miss——"

"Thou must call me Thyra—only Thyra—thy very own Thyra; for I will not care for anyone but thee."

"Eh, but I'm glad of that! Here comes Jerry with our dinner, and you shall tell me all about the Orkneys. I am just daft to hear about them. The men are sea kings, and they call their heaven Walhalla—I remember that—and you are a sea princess—Princess Thyra! My word! but Donald Fraser has a friend worth talking about at the *lang, lang*

last." He said the three words with a sigh, and then continued, "I am fairly worn out with the common folk that have come here to bide with me—and they kent nothing about the Stuarts, but just the name of them, and that they go mad about. And my father says the Stuarts are for whamling poor Scotland o'er again—they are aye worrying her. I am not for the Stuarts, are you, Thyra?"

"I would not be so wicked," answered Thyra, falling easily into the boy's mood. "Yon is a grand picture you have downstairs, I think it is John Knox preaching the Word."

"Ay; it is. I am proud o' John Knox."

Then the sofa was pushed close to the spread table, and the two sat down to eat their dinner. "You can go your ways to-night, Jerry," said the masterful child; "I hae a princess to serve me now, and I'll not be requiring your help any more, man. You can bide wi' the lasses in the kitchen; you like their keckling better than my improving talk—oh, you needn't explain and excuse yourself, it is no matter; none whatever."

With a singular courtesy he then looked after Thyra's wants. Eating scarce anything himself, he took the greatest pleasure in directing her meal. He pushed the fish aside, saying, "You are a fine haddock, but we dinna ask you to dine with us to-day—we are both o' us tired to death o' fish; but here is some English mutton. The English are dour creatures, but

their sheep are good, when they feed on Scotch pasture—and a slice of the black cock's breast is good enough for King George. Maybe, you will try what they call a salad? I would just pass it on to the cattle, but plenty of folk are daft about salads. Poor things! The pudding and the shortcake are better. What will you have to drink?"

"I would like a cup of tea."

This little bubble of talk was as unreal to the child as it was to Thyra; but as they sipped their tea, he began to ask questions about Orkney; and the next morning they were reading together a history of the Islands which Lord Fraser sent in to them. From the first chapter it intralled the boy. When he heard how Agricola and the Roman galleys had sailed through strange storms as far as the giant pillars of Hoy, and durst not go within them, he said to Thyra, "Let me look at the print for myself"; and as soon as he saw the black letters, they put on flesh and blood to him. They became the Roman Emperor and his swarthy sailor men, and he saw, and he made Thyra see, the galleys lying in the golden mists of the morning and the shimmering glory of the auroras, longing but not daring to pass the awful gates.

"You see, Thyra," he explained, "they were feared for the gods. They thought they had come to the entrance of the Hyperborean regions. Roman soldiers and sailors never feared mortal men, but the gods! They are different. We are a' feared for the gods."

“ Little wonder they were feared,” answered Thyra. “ If thou couldst only see the cliffs of Hoy ! so high, so dark ! the sea roaring like thunder among them ; the air black with birds—eagles, falcons, gulls of every kind—millions of them, miles of them, the whirl and beat of their wings, their screams and cries fairly deafening and terrifying—no wonder strange men were feared.”

“ Are they always that way ? ”

“ Say that the sea was lying still under the moon—that the birds are asleep, or just crooning and restless—that the aurora was covering everything with a rosy veil, it might be still more awful. They believed they were at the end of the world ; and they did not want to enter the land of the gods. I think they would set sails and vanish as quickly as possible. The seals, too ! they might frighten them ; the sea would be full of seals then, no doubt.”

“ I have seen pictures of seals,” said Donald ; “ you will have seen the live creatures ? ”

“ Often,” she answered. “ The little gray seals lie about on the wrack, hundreds of them together ; or they play in the water, rising and sinking noiselessly ; or they loll lazily on their backs, or they fan themselves with their flappers, but always they look perfectly happy and contented. There are so many of them yet, and centuries ago they must have crowded the shores of the Islands.”

“ The Romans would not fear them. They would

think them some kind of mermen and mermaids. Do they look frightsome?"

"Not the little gray seals—they look very human—but the sea lions! they are frightsome! I have not seen any, but my father says they snap, and snarl, and fight continually. They live on the very outside reefs, with no land between them and the other side of the world. Seldom do they see the face of man, except when some big ship goes to the bottom with all on board."

The Roman Emperor lying with his ships at the gates of the Hyperborean region, and the great seals watching drowning men, and foundering ships, filled the boy's imagination for many days; and the supernatural element investing these daring Roman intruders made a fine background for the dash and freedom of those sea kings, who feared nothing that was made of wind and water; who sailed boldly through the enchanted seas and found beyond the terrible cliffs the Fortunate Isles of their heroes. So it was the vikings, and the Norse jarls, and the Scottish earls, and the English forts that filled the early winter days for Donald and Thyra with all the storm and passion, the trial and triumph of restless humanity.

And Thyra was astonished to feel how greatly Donald's power of seeing the invisible quickened her own memory and imagination. As they sat talking of the heroes or tyrants of Orkney, she incidentally blended the conversation with many interesting facts relating

to the natural history of the places where events took place. Thus, when they were reading how Harold landed at dark on a certain point, she said, "I know the place, Donald, and as soon as it is dusk there, out come the sheerwaters by thousands; they are the owls of the sea, and they would shoot past the faces of Harold's sailors in quick-gliding flight, and fright them, and make them see the fetches of dead men." And soon after they came to a story of a lordly jarl feeding a gull that lighted on his shoulders, and Thyra lowered her voice and clasped Donald's hand, and said:

"It would not be a black-backed gull, for that solitary thing has not a friend either among men or birds. Birds shun and dread it, men hold it in abhorrence; even the good-natured St. Kildians pluck out its eyes and tie its wings together and send it adrift to perish."

"What has it done to deserve such hate?"

"It is always doing something to deserve it. It tears the nests of all birds, it breaks their eggs, it mangles their young. It kills because it loves to kill. It is a murderer, not because it is hungry, but because it is hateful."

"I am not sorry for it. It is a feathered Cain. Yet it is dreadful to be wicked, Thyra—I mean to be made wicked—to be born wicked. Will there be any elect among the black-backed gulls?" Then he was silent; it was a grave question to the precocious boy. He had thoughts on it he did not dare to utter.

His passion for information was insatiable. He sailed the ocean with great navigators, saw strange countries with great travelers, and fought the famous battles of the world over again with their victorious generals. The atlas and the big globe were ever at hand, and with his long, thin finger he followed the ships, and the camels, and the marching soldiers. Nevertheless, the root and flower of his whole nature was a piety sweet as Heaven and deep as eternity. He loved God first and best of all. It was a love without affectation, simple, natural, trustful even in his darkest and most painful hours. And Thyra soon knew when these hours were coming. He became restless, no matter how interesting the book or subject occupying them; his face flushed and paled, his eyes grew sad, fearful, pathetic, and in a few minutes he would say:

“Dearie, put away the book. I want the grip of the Psalms now. There’s no word of man that can help me thole what is coming.”

Then through the long night she held his hand and wiped the sweat of pain from his face, and hid the dear little lad under the shadow of the Almighty. No one but God knows what experiences these two souls had together. The child, indeed, drank of the cup the woman could not drink of, but she steadied his trembling hand and sweetened the bitter draught with the tenderest words and ministrations. It was a marvelous life to Thyra; a life she never could have chosen

for herself, but the best, the only one, to bring her nature to its noblest growth. Hitherto it had been Thyra who was to be loved and served. She was now learning how to love and serve others. Gradually there was springing up in her heart that flower of all that is divine—self-sacrifice for something helpless. She had never before been in such a position. No younger brother or sister had ever claimed her care, no sick parent, no neglected child. She had not even in her early years loved a doll or protected a homeless dog. Always she had been the receiver of love; she was now the giver.

Day by day she took the helpless, suffering Donald closer and closer to her heart. His pain was her pain, his pleasure was her pleasure. She forgot herself in him. And the more Donald claimed, the more she gave. All was so little, for her love, bathed in her pity, took possession of her whole being. It sweetened her voice, made her step softer, gave an air of something hushed and inexpressibly loving to all her ministrations. One morning, after a night of great suffering, the weary child laid his head upon her breast and began to cry a little. She leaned over and kissed him; her tears fell on his face.

“*Oh, mammy!*” he sobbed; “*oh, mammy!*” and from that moment she mothered him. He was her boy, and she jealously guarded her influence over him. It was a point with Lord Fraser that she should drive or walk one hour every day—and that hour he usually

spent with his son—but Thyra made a duty rather than a pleasure of this enforced exercise; and she was remarkably clever in providing Lady Fraser with excellent reasons for postponing, or omitting her daily visits. Beyond this jealousy, however, there was no element of selfishness in this affection. She had no thought, not the slightest, of material benefit to herself; and when Lady Fraser, at the end of the first quarter, brought her a generous sum of money, she put it away from her with eyes full of tears.

“What have I done for your ladyship or for Donald that can be paid with gold?” she asked with dignity.

“You have been kinder than words can tell to all of us.”

“Well, then? Thou hast given me a home, and the shelter of thy great name. Far better than gold is that to me.” Then she turned to the boy, who was watching her with his large, soulful eyes, and said, “Donald, would you wish me—your Thyra—to be paid with gold for loving you?”

“No! no!” he answered. “Come here, dearie, and I will give you twenty kisses. ‘Not a’ the gowd in Edinburgh town’ can buy a moment of love like yours.”

Then Lady Fraser lifted the gold and went away with it, wondering and a little sad. She felt that she had stood a moment at one gate of heavenly happiness that did not open for her. Donald and Thyra had

gone in and left her outside, and as she slowly went downstairs she had in her heart the pain of the rejected. It dawned upon her then that she had been mistaken in some of her estimates of love and life; and, had she known, it was for her one of those great moments when, more or less, we issue from our mortal environment and halt for a fleeting space on the step of some eternal gate.

So the weeks went by, and none of them was without love and comfort. Donald's intervals of freedom from pain were longer than usual; and during them he was exceedingly bright and busy. He kept his diary and made notes from the books he read, and worked cheerfully his little day, as if he knew it would last full threescore years and ten. And he was so eager to know all that was going on, that Lord Fraser whispered news to him about the Jacobites he told to no one else, and Donald was very proud of this confidence. At the same time Lady Fraser brought him the social gossip of the town, which, indeed, grew every day to be more and more flavored with politics; and Donald smiled when he heard her talk, and gave himself a little consequential shake as he audibly reflected:

"That is what the women say! Men folk know better." Then, turning to Thyra, he said, "When you take your walk to-day, dearie, just go up the High Street, and see what you can see, and hear what they are saying on the plane-stones. It is the common

folk on the street that know ; if there is aught coming they scent it."

And it was on this spring afternoon Thyra might have met the man she still adored, had not Destiny kept the door shut between them.

CHAPTER XI

Welcome, Royal Charlie!

SHE came home unconscious of the nearness of her lover; a little sad, indeed, that amid all the military stir and the scarcely concealed insurrectionary temper of the city she saw or heard nothing of him. If he was so much in the councils of the Stuarts, why was he not seen in the gathering Jacobite element? For politics subordinated every other subject; men openly wore the insignia of their opinions; women of the highest as well as the lowest rank quarreled over the white roses they wore, or did not wear. Song, so readily the interpreter of the Scottish heart, proclaimed Prince Charlie at every street corner. The fishwives mingled their cries of "Caller herrin'" with snatches of "Over the Water to Charlie!" Women nursing their babies were singing them to sleep with "Charlie, He's My Darling!" and everywhere men and maids were declaring in song, sentiments they would hardly have dared to express in plain words.

The Government, to balance this feeling, was making unusual displays of the military, whose marches

through the old city were at this time anything but triumphal in character. For women have a license to talk, and the lower class of women in Edinburgh were almost without exception the most passionate partisans of the young Prince coming to right his royal father. They endowed him with supernatural beauty and virtues and worshiped with the wildest enthusiasm the image they had set up. The marching, then, of an English regiment was an affair to call them out in all their virile strength of hate; and there were many men in those lines of scarlet who would rather have marched to the field of battle than walked the streets of Edinburgh pelted by the stinging sarcasms and contemptuous epithets of the women who thronged the sidewalks.

All these things Thyra described with a particular and picturesque force, and Donald longed for the next day's report; but it proved to be too rainy for walking, and so he invited his father and mother to dine with him. On these occasions he was extremely particular about the dinner. The cook was called to audience, and the menu carefully prepared according to his knowledge of what was agreeable and procurable. From his sofa he watched the laying of the table and wore through all the preparations the pleased air of being happily busy about his own entertainment. These little festivals were always interesting, but this evening the conversation turned naturally to the condition of the town, which Lady

Fraser said was "seething like a pot ready to boil over."

"Some blind impulse, some foolish, precarious dream is leading the people out," said Lord Fraser. "I know not what will come of it. There is a sense of exultation everywhere; men pass in and out of their shops as if they were waiting and watching; the better class of women are at their windows; the lower class are on the streets—meddling, aggressive, riotous, both in their mirth and their anger. It is possible, it is likely, that the Prince is in Scotland even now."

"I think not," said Lady Fraser. "I was at Lady Gordon's yesterday, and young MacDonald was still there. If the Prince was on Scottish ground, he would be paying court to him instead of adoring the bewitching Sara MacArgall."

"They are a handsome couple," said Lord Fraser. "The MacDonalds are all fine fellows; this lad Hector particularly so. He knows Charles Stuart as well as anyone can—was with him in the French failure of last year, and afterward in Paris. I heard that he went as far north as the Orkneys and Shetland, trying to persuade those Norse sailors to come out for the Stuarts. Some say he expects a thousand of them to meet him at Thurso this month. I do not believe it."

Thyra wished to speak; she wished passionately to deny this report. She was on fire, her heart was beating violently, she felt as if the room was whirling

round with her at a pace she could not endure. Yet she lifted her knitting, and was trying to count the stitches as she heard Lady Fraser say:

“I heard that Sara MacArgall’s wedding dress was made, and that she would marry MacDonald in June; but if the Prince come sooner——”

So far Thyra was painfully conscious of every word uttered; then it seemed to her as if there was a rift in her heart, and her life blood dropping, dropping through it. The floor was no longer there, her feet were on the void—she was going, she knew not where—all was darkness—black darkness—utter unconsciousness.

When she came to herself Lady Fraser and Donald were at her bedside and the family physician holding her hand. “Now you are all right,” he said. “You have been sitting up too late, and going out too little. I told you before, you must have one, even two, hours in the open air each day.”

“The room was hot,” she answered; “it was only a moment’s failure. I am quite well now.”

“And you are not to worry yourself about Prince Charles,” he continued. “I have had to go to half a dozen women to-day, all of them hysterical about the political situation—as if women had anything to do with politics or were fit to have anything to do with them. Let Prince Charles dree his own fate; don’t you worry about him.”

“I care nothing about him; I would not give one

hair of Donald Fraser's head to settle the crown on Charles Stuart's! Where is Donald?"

He crept close to her, and she kissed him and folded him in her arms; then, gathering all her powers together, she rose and went back with him and Lady Fraser to the parlor. Lord Fraser was reading there, and he laid aside his book and played a game of chess with Donald, while Thyra knit a little and talked to Lady Fraser about her spring dresses. MacDonald and the Stuart were quite forgotten. No one, however, had associated Thyra's lapse with the young man; no one but Donald; and he was sure in his prescient little soul that Hector MacDonald's name was the cause of Thyra's illness. Accordingly he took an intense dislike to him. Not reasonable, of course, but it is the things beyond reason that we have often the closest reckoning with.

As soon as the chessboard was put away, Donald made Thyra come to his side; and in doing so, he had to lift the book his father had laid down. It was one of Ben Jonson's plays, and he said with his pleasant little laugh, "Father takes naturally to Scotch authors, even when they are not known as Scotsmen."

"Ben Jonson was an Englishman, Donald. You ought to know that. A very Londoner, born somewhere near Charing Cross, I think."

"I am knowing all that, father. A lot of our great men, that ought by right to be Scotsmen, have been born in England, ay, and in other countries, too,

and have been called Englishmen, and even something not so good. Ben's father was one of the Johnstones of Annandale, and just because he went to London poor Ben had to be born in England and called English. I dare say he pined all his life for the bonnie leas of Ecclefechan."

"That is special pleading, Donald."

"It is a good enough plea, if it list Ben Jonson among Scotchmen, as it ought to do."

The little fellow seemed almost inspired that night; he recited, he argued, he quoted from this and that writer, and without a shadow of unkindness pointed out some remarkable similarities in their works. His father listened and wondered and went away finally very sad. He saw that the child was fulfilling a long time in a short time and ripening rapidly for the schools of heaven.

And Thyra also understood his brilliant spirits; she was sure he was exerting himself to keep the conversation away from the Stuarts and the coming war. Perhaps he thought she had interests in it no one knew of; at any rate, she divined the kindness of his efforts, and when the evening was over, and he lay white and weary, but always smiling, she said, "Now, Donald, I will do all the talking there is to do. Thou art very tired; I know thou art."

"We will both of us be still," he answered, "and let One speak that never said a wrong word. Open the Book, Thyra—see, it opens itself at the very

place we need—‘*Let not your hearts be troubled*’—go on, dearie; there is no sorrow those words will not comfort.”

Yet Thyra in the solitude of her room was not comforted. For she did not bring the sorrow that lay so heavy on her heart to the Comforter. She was afraid to do so. Would Christ, indeed, care for the grief of a girl forsaken? Would he not have just cause to say, “The cup you have mingled you must drink.” Thus wronging the tender heart that would have pitied and strengthened her, she had no help. She could not tell Lady Fraser how cruelly Hector had treated her, for if she did, it was most likely Lady Fraser would feel it right to acquaint Sara Mac-Argall or Lady Gordon with his treachery; and as for Donald, she knew that he would feel so keenly with her, and so keenly against Hector, that he would be engrossed with the subject and all the pleasant, orderly routine of his sinless days be interrupted. No, unless it was a necessity, she would not trouble Donald—and there was no one else.

She was thankful now for the doctor’s prescription of an hour or two each day in the fresh air. It gave her so long a breathing space; for the shame and grief of her desertion lay very heavy upon her heart. And it was pleasant to see how anxious everyone was for her health and happiness. For some time at least Lady Fraser insisted on her driving, and very often she went with her, and always as the carriage started

she looked up and saw Donald leaning on his crutches watching her away with smiles.

Thus life sped until the middle of July; then the tension and excitement in the city became every day more noticeable. Men, like war-horses, scented the battle from afar. There were omens and portents and prophecies in every mouth. None was so young, or so indifferent, that he did not have a dream to tell; and the sense of unrest and change affected the most orderly households. One warm afternoon, as Donald lay at the open window and Thyra was reading to him, a servant brought a message from Lady Fraser. "Miss MacArgall was downstairs and if Donald was agreeable she would like to pay him a visit." Donald was delighted and sent an eager acceptance of the offer. Then Thyra laid down the book and, bending over him, said, "Let me go away, Donald. I do not want to see the lady—I do not, indeed."

"Oh, no!" he cried; "you must not go! My dearie, stay with me! I cannot do without you—and I want her to see you."

"I cannot stay—I cannot."

"Yes, yes;" and he threw his arms around her neck, and ere she could win away from his embrace Lady Fraser and Sara MacArgall were in the room. Then there was no retreating, and she stood erect and with calm dignity received the introduction that was inevitable. It was impossible for Thyra not to feel some interest in the woman who had interfered so

vitality in her own destiny. Sara might be both ignorant and innocent of the wrong committed, and yet, there she sat, a beautiful Fate whom she could neither blame nor defy. Against her will she looked at her, listened to her, and acknowledged the charm of a personality so different from her own. For Sara's fine form, her glorious hair and splendid coloring were all admirably set off by a gown of soft white muslin, knots of blue ribbon here and there intensifying its air of coolness and purity. Donald was charmed with her presence. He begged one of the roses from her belt and kissed it; and then she kissed him for "the dearest little knight in the world." And Thyra had in that moment a distracting jealousy; this woman had taken her lover, would she also take her only friend? She felt truly as if she hated her.

Presently Lady Fraser said, "I heard that Major MacDonald had left Edinburgh again. How do you get through the days without him?"

"Very badly, I assure you," answered Sara; "but I think my aunt Gordon misses him most. Yet the servants miss him, the house misses him, every moment of the day misses him; it is not likely I should be an exception. My brother Revan has also gone—they have both gone *northward!*" She said the last word in a joyous tone, as if it contained unlimited possibilities of happiness.

"And when will they return? And shall I be bid to the bridal when they return?"

"Who knows?" she asked. "The answer to both questions is in the hands of Good Fortune." She did not appear inclined to continue the conversation, and after some desultory remarks on various feminine topics—in which she was careful to include Thyra—she bade Donald a good-by and left the room. Lady Fraser went out with her, and when they reached the hall Sara delayed her departure to ask:

"Who is that beautiful girl?"

"She is a kind of ward of my brother's. He sent her to me. Donald and she are inseparables."

"You have never taken her into society yet?"

"She has very amiable scruples; her father is in India, and on the high seas, and while he is in very constant danger she will not dance or make merry. I think she shows a very proper feeling, and she adores Donald; he is sufficient for her."

"The boy is captivating. Who would not be satisfied with him? Yet she looks to me as if she had a secret sorrow—perhaps some love affair."

"I think not. She has never had a letter since she came here. No one has called on her. She is not a love-lorn maid, I think."

"Where does she come from? She is a paragon of beauty."

"From the Orkney Islands."

A queer, startling sensation, nebulous and fleeting, passed through Sara. It flitted between Thyra and

Hector, but took no direct form, and she did not give it a moment's encouragement. On the contrary, Thyra was only too conscious of the very form and reality of her suffering. This queenly, radiant creature clothed in white; this smiling, hopeful woman, whose very atmosphere was that of a class Thyra recognized as far above her experiences, how could she ever hope to rival her? She hated her; and she could not help it. It was useless to reason with herself, useless to make excuses for Sara. Sara might not be aware of her claim upon Hector, but if she was, Thyra was certain she would regard it only from the lofty standpoint of her own position. She would wonder that a mere sailor's daughter should have deluded herself with hopes so far above her. She might pity her, but her pity would be a kind of scorn. Thyra's whole nature was insurgent, and the revolt was stimulated and made more painful by Donald's praises of Sara. She burst into tears at last and was glad to throw the whole blame of her misery on Donald.

"I cannot bear thy talk, Donald," she said, when he asked, "What was she greeting so sairly for?"

"I cannot bear thy talk, and if thou think so much of Miss MacArgall, she had better come here in my place."

"Now, Thyra, that is jealousy. It is the height of folly to be jealous."

"Yes, I am jealous; she has kinfolk and lovers and

friends. I have only thee, and thou art putting her before me."

"Tuts! tuts!" he said as if he was angry, but the little fellow was secretly delighted. "I must tell my father," he said with a little kink of laughter, "here are two of the bonniest women in Scotland jealous for my love. It is fair bewildering. But don't cry, Thyra; I love none so well as you, though it was easy seen Sara MacArgall was much taken with me. But I would snap my fingers at her rather than give you a moment's fret. My own dear princess, come and kiss me. There is none like you." And he was glad to feel her tears upon his cheek, for love is often, for very excess, cruel, and tears of the beloved are a proof of affection it sees, as well as feels.

However, it is good to love, and to be loved! It is the purest well of happiness given us, yet how sure we are to trouble its crystal waters with our jealousy, or doubt, or selfishness.

It was some time before Sara called on Lady Fraser again, and when she did so Donald was not included in the visit. The little fellow was quite ill-tempered over the omission. "She is that taken up with Hector MacDonald and Prince Charles, she hasn't a thought for me," he said; "and I have no doubt Hector is a long, red, bony Highlandman, spluttering Gaelic, and ugly enough to frighten the English into running away at the sight o' him." He caught the denial in Thyra's face; it blazed from her eyes and

cheeks, and he could almost see the words quivering on her lips. But she did not utter them, and Donald would not notice her emotion. "As for Prince Charles," he continued, "every woman in Edinburgh has lost her senses about him. It is preposterous! He does not know them, and he does not want to know them; yet they are all clean daft for the lad they never saw!"

The summer, full of unrest, of rumors, passed on, and everyone had grown weary of looking for the man—desired or undesired—who did not come. One night at the end of July, when the long twilight was merging into darkness, Sara and Lady Gordon were sitting at the open windows, watching. When ten o'clock struck, Lady Gordon closed her windows, and said, "We may as well try and sleep now, Sara. The day is over." The words were hardly uttered when the door was hastily opened, and a young Highlander, advancing, fell on one knee before Sara and gave her a letter. He then rose, bowed to Lady Gordon, and said:

"The Prince has come! He sends you greeting."

She stood up to receive the message, and then Sara joined in the rejoicing, and the household was called together, and food and wine brought for the bringer of glad tidings. He was Colin MacDonald, a cousin of Hector's, and he had traveled night and day with the news. It was already spreading through the city

like wildfire and turning all the streets into a carnival of the maddest enthusiasm.

"When did the Prince arrive?" asked Lady Gordon.

"On the 23d of July. It was his fate to land at Eriska. It was wet and stormy, and he went to the house of Angus MacDonald and sent messengers to all the chiefs, trysting them to meet him at Glenfinnan on the 19th of August. They will see who can be first there. Yes, indeed!"

Sara was of the same opinion; Lady Gordon held her peace. She doubted whether the chiefs "out" for this young man's father would go out again. Thirty years of peace, progress, and prosperity under the House of Brunswick were to be put against the mere promises of a Stuart. And what was the promise of a Stuart worth? However, she would not voice the one discordant note in the joyful acclaim. Still, Sara felt her dissent, and the next day she could not be satisfied until she had carried the news to Lady Fraser; she wanted this triumph, and she took it. Lady Fraser made light of the whole matter. She said, "The fishwives and the servant lasses had been skirling the news up and down Edinburgh all night long—men and women both, raving and roaring for 'Charlie,' as if it made any difference to them whether Charlie or Georgie sat in the king's chair!"

"Of course it makes a difference," said Sara. "The poorest man and woman in the land wants a

Scotch king to reign in Scotland, and, pray, who but a Stuart?"

"Poor, misguided lad!" said Lady Fraser. "However, God save the King! no matter who the king be. There is only one point I would stand stiff about—I would fight, I would die, ere I would say a word for a king who was a Papist. That is my principle, and fire could not burn it out of me."

"You might as well say you are for King George."

"I am for a Protestant king. If Charles is Protestant, he will do as well as George—provided he obeys the laws and behaves himself."

Then Sara went off a little offended, and Lady Fraser went to Donald's room, where she hoped to find her lord. He was there, talking to Donald and with the help of a map showing his son the locality which each clan inhabited and telling him which were presumably loyal, and which were known to be ready to rise for the Stuarts.

Lady Fraser came in with a little swagger of pleasurable offense. "I have some late information," she said; "Sara MacArgall has just been here, and she asserts the Prince landed a week ago, and that MacDonald of Sleat and the Laird of McLeod have each raised more than a thousand men for him."

"I can better that information, Cecilia," answered Lord Fraser. "MacDonald of Sleat will not lift a finger for Prince Charles, nor suffer his clan to do so. As for McLeod, it was he who sent the Lord President

word of the Prince's landing, at the same time answering him that neither himself nor Clanranald would give the least assistance. MacDonald of Brisdale went to see him, but only to urge the folly of the undertaking and beg the Prince to return to Italy."

"Well, the rebellion has begun, and the Jacobites are very confident. Sara says she will not marry Hector MacDonald until he enters Edinburgh with the victorious Prince, and she bade me get my gown ready, as I would need it in less than a month. Hector wrote her that the Prince had promised to dance at her wedding, and she assures me that he is an extremely handsome man."

"I talked with a friend this morning who saw him land. He was disguised as an English clergyman in a plain black coat, not very clean linen, a round wig, black stockings, and brass buckles on his shoes. Not a picturesque figure, certainly—but he will, doubtless, assume the tartan now."

"Sara said a great eagle hovered o'er his head as he landed, and it was taken as a good omen."

"I do not know why. The eagle has nothing to do with either Scotland or England—and it is a bird of prey. Did she say what force this Prince brought with him?"

"I asked the question, but she did not answer it."

"I can tell you; there were seven persons with him, the only one of any consideration being Tullibardine, the attainted Duke of Athol. The other six were

Irish adventurers. He had also a few guns and broadswords, and four thousand louis-d'or."

Nevertheless, out of seven such scanty resources the rebellion had really begun. Every day brought rumors of fresh accessions to Charles' army, for in thus throwing himself upon the love and loyalty of the Highland clans, expecting all, and taking all, from them, he succeeded in raising a far more intense devotion than if he had landed at the head of a French army. A brave people, they threw prudence aside in personal admiration for his daring confidence in them. On the 19th of August he went to Glenfinnan to meet the clans summoned there on that day. The valley wore its usual desolate aspect; no one was to be seen but a few ragged children, who gazed wonderingly at the mysterious strangers. After some wretched hours of anxious waiting a bagpipe was heard, and the Camerons, eight hundred strong, appeared upon the line of the horizon. Before dark the number assembled amounted to fifteen hundred men, and in their midst Tullibardine raised a banner of red silk with a white center. A storm of pipe music, a cloud of shimmering bonnets, and a long, enthusiastic shout greeted this standard of their hopes and desires.

The Government was ill prepared for this insurrection. King George was in Germany, and there were only fourteen hundred available troops in Scotland. These were immediately put under the com-

mand of Sir John Cope, with orders to attack the rebels before they could reach the Lowlands. He expected to receive important additions and aid from the clans loyal to the Government as he marched northward; but no such support was forthcoming, and fearing with his small army to enter the mountain passes or fight Highlanders with their feet on the heather, he turned aside to Inverness, leaving the whole Lowlands open to the Prince.

Very sagaciously the rebels left Cope behind them and marched southward; their force being augmented, as they went, by Chiny MacPherson and other allies, and on the 4th of September they entered Perth. Here the Prince assumed the air of royalty, but with a genial condescension and a brave manner that was a striking contrast to the arid reserve, sluggish temper, and cowardly spirit exhibited by his father on the same spot thirty years previously. He liked to display his agreeable person in the Highland costume, richly decorated with gold lace; and to surround himself with a large body-guard of his parti-colored, picturesque mountaineers. At Perth he was joined by Drummond, and by Lord George Murray, the latter the ablest leader in the expedition.

Charles remained at Perth until the 11th of September and then marched southward. There was nothing to deter him; Cope had left the whole way open to Edinburgh, and in that city there was nothing in readiness to meet an enemy except the Castle. The

provost was secretly in favor of the Stuarts, and the city distracted and uncertain. Nothing could be determined, and when on Sunday, the 15th, the Highland army was near the gates, everything was in confusion. The citizens were called together for consultation, but amid an indescribable confusion of tongues one word was insistent and predominant—the cry, “Surrender!”

It was known that Cope was close behind the rebels, and two deputations went to the Prince to beg a little delay; but they could not obtain a hearing, and they returned to Edinburgh before daybreak on the morning of the 17th of September. The Canongate was open to allow their carriages to pass, and a party of Highlanders rushed in with them. They relieved the guards, opened the other gates, and the capital of Scotland was in the hands of Charles Stuart and his followers.

Edinburgh had not surrendered to a conqueror, but to the ideal of its own passionate imagination. It wanted the ancient kingdom of Scotland restored, and a king of its own royal line on the throne. Prince Charles was the embodiment of this desire, and he was, therefore, the god of their idolatry; and at noon that day they received him with tumultuous rejoicing. His appearance seemed to deserve all their mad enthusiasm. His fine form was magnificently arrayed in the royal Stuart tartan, gleaming with gold lace and jewels. He rode a splendid white horse and was surrounded

by a nobly picturesque body-guard of Highland chiefs. In his hand he carried his plumed bonnet, sometimes lifting it aloft to answer the shouts of "Welcome, royal Charlie!" sometimes bending low to the adulation of lovely women beaming on him from every window.

The royal youth had no wish to lose a word of the adulation of the populace. He drank it greedily, and answered the outspoken blessings with smiles that intoxicated such untamed natures. The whole city was in a frenzy, and when the Prince alighted at Holyrood and stepped proudly within the ancient palace of the Stuarts, the shouts of the people reverberated through the city and found out the English soldiers keeping grim hold in the Castle above them.

The next day Lady Fraser received an invitation to Sara's wedding. She came into Donald's parlor with the letter in her hand, declaring, she knew not how to accept, or refuse. "You see, Donald," she continued, "though the ceremony is to be in St. Giles' Kirk, the wedding feast is to be given by Prince Charles at Holyrood. I should like to go, but——"

"My father would not like it," said Donald.

"I would better stay at home. Lady MacIvan is sure to be there; she will tell me everything."

Then Thyra said: "I should like to see the young lady married. I should like it very much."



WELCOME, ROYAL CHARLIE!

“Then you shall see the sight, dearie!” answered Donald. “Mother, how can you manage it?”

“Thyra can go as my representative. The Fraser liveries will pass her readily. Shall it be so, Thyra?”

So the next morning Thyra appeared beautifully gowned in pale-blue silk, and Lady Fraser hung around her neck a chain of pearls and added some last feminine touches of lace and ribbon and perfume to her attire. She was then driven in all possible state to the kirk and placed in the seat reserved for Lady Fraser. It abutted on the main aisle, and she understood that Hector must pass her so closely that she would be able to lay her hand upon him. Meanwhile there was a constant assembling of guests, who talked of the Prince and the bride and bridegroom with a freedom that revealed many painful events to Thyra.

She sat in a sorrowful trance, realizing fully that she was going to take a final farewell of the man she yet loved very dearly. After this hour it would be a mortal sin to let him enter her imagination. She longed then to see him, though but for a moment, ere he was the husband of Sara MacArgall.

When the bride and bridegroom entered she rose with the crowd, and Sara passed her so closely that their garments might have mingled but for the pew door. She was radiantly beautiful and radiantly happy, triumphant love and joy were in her carriage, and in her large blue eyes, and in her confident smile. Her

gown of white satin, threaded with purest silver, glittered in the sunshine; her glorious hair fell unbound except by a sword of large pearls, and she looked like a queen among women as she advanced leaning upon the arm of her grandfather.

As one may gaze upon the Beloved One dying, so Thyra looked at her faithless lover. A moment or two she might do so, then it would all be over. She must forget him! Forget him forever! A blind, painful terror assailed her at the thought. How could she do so? With the same lovelit face he had once met her. She knew all his charming ways; she could tell the very words of endearment that were trembling on his lips. All the ecstasy and sorrow of love strove in her heart, and those dear, dead hours called softly to her. Over the thrilling pallor of her cheeks a tear rolled unbidden. It shamed her and caused an instant repression of all visible feeling. Why should she weep now? It was all too late. Tears would never teach

“ the grass to grow
On the trampled meadows of long ago.”

A sudden burst of joyful song, quick movements, rustling silks, and glad exclamations roused her from her trance of grief. She stood up in all her exquisite loveliness and watched the happy couple as they came slowly down the aisle together. It was a few moments of great stress and suffering, for as Hector approached she felt that he saw her. His eyes were upon her, and they compelled her to lift her own.

Just for a moment they gazed at each other, but in that moment Hector saw Thyra's grief and despair, and Thyra saw on Hector's face, what?—a great wonder and perhaps some annoyance. He made not the slightest sign of recognition, but, stooping to his bride, said something in a whisper, at which she raised her fair face and answered him with a smile full of Love's own blessedness.

After all, she was glad she had come to see the consummation of Hector's treachery. There was no longer hope or doubt to torture her. Her love, her still poignant memories, she cast them all into that fine edge of fiery suffering, where the elements of our moral nature refine themselves to the burning point; and even before she reached home she had tasted the austere sweetness of such sacrifice. She remembered Donald; she would have to smile and tell him and Lady Fraser all she had seen. She must do it cheerfully, too, for they had sent her with such loving good-will. And in this resolute conquest of self she found her strength and discovered that the surest way to happiness is to live for others.

Public events soon, however, put Sara MacArgall's wedding out of mind. In three days Cope was near Edinburgh, and Prince Charles went out to meet him. All business was in suspense; people scarcely ate or slept; the coming battle was the sink or swim of the Jacobite cause. Before dawn the Highlanders surprised, and rushed on the astonished English lines,

cutting at the noses of their horses in order to throw the cavalry into confusion. This onset was followed by a slaughter which has few parallels in modern warfare. The next day Charles returned to Edinburgh with his victorious army, and the intoxicating scenes of welcome that had marked his entrance into the city were more than renewed. Such Jacobites as had been prudent hitherto became mad with exultation, and all doubtful people became Jacobites. Nothing was talked of but divine rights and high-sounding victories; and Charles assumed all the pomp and etiquette of royalty at Holyrood. He was the idol of the ladies, he gave feasts and balls and riding and hunting parties; he made "proclamations" and touched for the "King's evil"; he did all things that befitted his heroically romantic position and kingly descent. And from the 22d of September until the 31st of October the grand old city dreamed a dream of wonderful splendor, and of all kinds of high enterprise.

And yet as the weeks went on, a sense of fear and anxiety assailed the pathetic little court at Holyrood; the Jacobite ladies had presentiments of their passing glory, and the faded captains of the wild little army knew well, that however slow the English Government might be in moving, the hour of reprisal was sure to come. An anxious unrest pervaded all ranks; doubt and fear chilled enthusiasm; there was a daily disenchantment at work. Only Prince Charles showed

the same cheerful indifference. For he believed himself to be flying on the wings of his destiny to his appointed throne; and one day, to the utter amazement and perplexity of his Council and captains, he smilingly announced his intention of marching on London forthwith, in order to take possession of the English Crown.

CHAPTER XII

All is Well with the Child

THE determination of Charles to invade England was the first step toward his downfall.

The English Jacobites had shown no disposition to join him, but the Prince was sure he had only to show himself over the Border, to rouse a great movement in his favor. Hector MacDonald—relying on his intimate friendship—endeavored to persuade Charles to abandon his design. “The Highland clans do not wish to go to England,” he said. “They have taken up arms to seat a Stuart on the throne of Scotland, and they are ready to fight in order to keep him there; but they are unwilling to invade England.” There was, however, no reasoning with the Fate bent on ruining the Stuart cause. In the face of all opposition Charles began his march southward, on the 31st day of October, with about six thousand men.

On the 18th of November, Carlisle, being quite defenseless, fell into his hands; and he entered the city in triumph, riding on a white horse with a hundred pipers playing before him. This was the last favor Fortune was to give him. Though he passed through Cumberland, Westmoreland, and

Lancashire, the strongholds of English Jacobitism, few accessions were gained; while every night some of the Highlanders deserted and stealthily took the nearest way back to their own mountains. Meanwhile the English Government had at last divined the real gravity of the situation. It was sending an army under General Wade to meet Charles, and a still larger force under the Duke of Cumberland was following. London was in readiness to receive the rebels; volunteers were mustering everywhere; and a vigilant fleet was in the Channel, ready to intercept any help coming to Charles from France.

All these things were less discouraging than the cold indifference with which the Jacobite army was allowed to march to the very center of England. It was eloquent of doom to the Stuart cause; and when they reached Derby there was a steady determination among the men to turn back. It was, in fact, flight or annihilation. Lord George Murray and Hector MacDonald pointed this out to the Prince. He was angry and then sulky, but, finding the retreat inevitable, turned northward with moody displeasure. For, though of a more pleasant temper than his morose father, he was as completely possessed with the "divinity" of his position; he considered his cause so sacred that some miraculous success must ever attend it; and against this idea the value of a good general was as nothing. Lord George Murray at this crisis told him plainly that "divine rights were now

antiquated," and when Charles turned for support to Hector, that young man—not unmindful of many small snubs and impertinences—added, "Prince, it is so. Even the Highlanders have forgotten such high pretensions."

"So you also are a traitor!" Charles said angrily, and Hector answered:

"I have gone too far, Prince, to deserve that name."

After this conversation, however, Charles scarcely noticed Hector, and when they reached Carlisle he gave orders that Major MacDonald with fifty of his clan should be left there to support the Lancashire regiment under Major Townley. The fate of these men was so certain that the Duke of Perth refused to allow a man of his clan to join them, and Lord George Murray entreated that the defenses of the castle be blown up, in place of such certain sacrifice of brave men. The prince was, however, determined on this thing, and the callous obduracy with which he left this unhappy garrison to the first vengeance of English military slaughter, or to the horrible civil punishment of traitors, is an odious example of that egotistic fanaticism which made him regard the sufferings of the thousands of worthy men who died for his house "mere incidents in their line of duty which it was not fitting he should either prevent or regret."

So Hector was left at Carlisle with the doomed garrison, and Charles fled as quickly as possible to the

covert of the Highland line, making his headquarters at Inverness, which they reached on the 18th of February. The Duke of Cumberland was at Aberdeen. He was in no hurry to follow Charles into the snowbound passages of the mountains, for he knew that time would work destruction for him. The Highland army was without money and without food, and on the 8th of April, when the English troops moved forward to attack them, they were in wretched condition.

This conflict, delayed for three months, was known to be inevitable, and the heart of Edinburgh was full of fear and sorrow. Gloom and foreboding were everywhere. Holyrood—all its lights and music dead and silent—wore its old aspect of haunting misfortune. The citizens were silent, and anxious, even the cries of the fishwives had a mournful monotony, and the white cockade and the white rose had vanished from every breast.

Sara MacDonald was in deep distress. Her grandfather and her brother were with the little army at Inverness, and her husband in the dungeons of Carlisle Castle. All her efforts to obtain some enlargement for him had failed, though she had thrown herself at the feet of General Hawley to entreat it. And even this brutal soldier had pointed out with rude mirth the foolish cruelty of Charles Stuart in leaving nearly four hundred men to defend absolutely untenable works. "It was a devilish piece of business," he

said; "why did he not blow up the works?" And into Sara's heart there came a conviction of some private dislike as the motive. She had feared, she had even warned Hector of, a familiarity which might end in hatred; and she understood Charles' spite against the lukewarm English Jacobites in leaving them, with a contingent of the clan who had offended him, to merciless slaughter or brutal execution.

Early in April she came one afternoon to see Lady Fraser. She looked like a woman dogged by calamity, who hears the inexorable footsteps behind her. "I have had a terrible vision," she said. Her wet feet were on the fender, her damp garments clung around her form, as she leaned toward the blazing fire. "It is over with the Stuarts, and with others far nearer and dearer. What fools we Highlanders have been!—and for one so unworthy." Then she burst into passionate weeping. Donald looked at her with pity; Lady Fraser gave her some mulled wine, and kissed her white, wet face; and Thyra raised her glance from her sewing, and instantly put herself in Sara's place. After all, she had had but a short joy with Hector, and here, on its heels, was such bitter sorrow. She was so busy following out this train of thought that Sara's mournful whispering voice was scarcely within her consciousness. Yet the unhappy woman spoke with a weird distinctness and power. "I was at MacArgall last night," she said. "And as I looked over the strath a gigantic warrior appeared



THE STRATH WAS FULL OF SHADOWY MEN.

at the opening of the pass. He stood on the highest peak of the mountain, and waved his hands to the east, and the west, the north, and the south, and as he did so, cried in a voice that filled all space: '*Birds of Prey! Birds of Prey! Come hither!*' and immediately the heavens and the earth were darkened by their black, shadowing wings. Then I heard him call '*Murdo, Maximus, Chief of Clan Argall*'; and my grandfather answered him from afar off. Afterward he called my brother Revan, and many others, till the whole strath was full of shadowy men, and I knew that they were dead men, and that grandfather and Revan were among them. We shall soon have a great battle, and we shall know that all is lost."

She spoke with such an air of conviction that Lady Fraser never attempted to deny her statement. All she could do was to try to comfort her, but the only comfort she could have given was to promise Lord Fraser's intercession for Hector, and that she could not do. Lord Fraser's commands on this subject were stringent and positive; and with considerable anger he had forbidden any information of this kind. Indeed, it was impossible for him to take a different stand; his friends and acquaintances involved in the rebellion were so numerous that such interference would have entailed him an amount of labor verging on the impossible. There were also phases of suffering, annoyance, and, perhaps, of personal injury of which he could make no calculation, and so he had

commanded that no petitioners for mercy were to be brought to his notice.

Understanding this attitude, Sara made no request. She said she had only come to give some way to grief and fear nearly killing her. Lady Gordon was ill with sorrow, and every Jacobite woman she knew had her own cup of mingled indignations and griefs to drink. If Lady Fraser would only let her weep a little in her company, and say a pitying word to her. And this much Lady Fraser was glad to do. She cheered and encouraged the forlorn woman fearfully looking forward to evil as best she could, and after she had sent her away a little comforted, went back to Donald to talk the matter over with him.

The lad was quiet, and seemed to take but little interest in it. "Of course, there must be a dreadful battle," he said. "That was a strange dream," he added; "did you notice Sara's face as she told it to you? It was not like a living woman's face. I thought she was going to die. I wonder if that great gray wraith she saw was the 'fetch' of some dead Stuart? Perhaps it was the evil genius of the family—they must have an evil genius. Who else could have sent Prince Charles that weary, useless tramp into England? Who else could have made him do that cruel thing at Carlisle? How can men fight for him after it? My father told me the Duke of Perth refused straight out to leave any of his clan for certain slaughter; others did the same, yet Charles

ordered poor Hector MacDonald to stay! And he pretended to be Hector's friend! Pah! the man is dreadful! I don't want to talk any more of the Stuarts."

In fact, Donald had been watching Thyra's face more than Sara's, and he was much interested in what it revealed. He was sure she was suffering—but why? This was the question puzzling his tender, childish heart. For he loved Thyra dearly, and he could not bear to think of her in any kind of trouble. A week after this visit, Lord Fraser came into Donald's room one night, and his face was so eloquent, and his whole bearing so decisive, that Donald cried out eagerly, "What is it, father? What has happened?"

"Everything has happened, Donald. Prince Charles is flying; the whole Jacobite army is in rout, or cut to pieces."

"When, father? Where? How?"

"On the 16th; on the moor of Culloden; near noon, during a great storm of hail and sleet. The terrible onslaught of the Highlanders—though they were starving men—carried them through the first line of the English army, but the volley of the second line so disordered them that they broke and fled. Poor fellows! there was trouble among themselves as well! The MacDonalds, to whom Robert Bruce had given as a perpetual honor the right hand in battle, had been placed on the left hand, and in consequence they refused to fight. Their chief fell trying to lead

them on, sobbing out with his last breath, 'My God! Have the children of my tribe forsaken me!'"

There was a sharp cry from Thyra at these words, and Lord Fraser and Donald looked at her. She had risen to her feet, and was white as the cambric in her hand. "It was so terrible!" she said, "I could not help it."

"You are ill."

"No, no! I am so sorry for the Chief; that is all."

"Then go on, father."

"Lord Elcho saw the left wing was still unrouted, and he begged the Prince to lead it in person. He would not, and Lord Elcho called him an 'Italian Scoundrel,' and some worse name; and the slaughter became so frightful, for the army of the Prince was flying in every direction over that desolate, flat moor, and was mercilessly hunted by the English dragoons. In a few dreadful minutes all was over; and this Stuart contest for the crown, which had lasted for fifty-seven years, was finally ended on Culloden Moor in less than fifty-seven minutes."

"And what of Prince Charles?"

"He fled. I hope he may reach France. He will give us no more trouble, and I do not wish his death."

"But, oh, what of the good men he left in Carlisle? And the good men who have died in battle for him? Indeed, I hope the English will get him. Let him, first of all, die the death of a traitor. He deserves it!" said Thyra.

She seemed much moved, and Donald noticed that she went often to the window. He knew she had gone there to hide her face; there was nothing for her to see in the dark, wet street. What personal interest had she in the matter? He was troubled, and suspicious, and he knew not why. About midnight he awakened, and, in the stillness of the house, a sound he instantly recognized became painfully clear to him. Thyra was in distress. He heard her soft footfalls upon the carpet as she paced her room; he heard the strangled sobs which she tried to bury in her pillow. He bore these evidences of her grief as long as he could; then he reached for his crutches, and went to her door. As he turned the handle she heard the noise, and raised herself; looking with white, piteous face at the little white-robed figure leaning on his crutches, and looking at her with a yearning love she could not withstand.

"Oh, Donald! My wee Donald, what art thou doing here?" she cried. "On thy bare feet, too! Go back to thy bed; I will come to thee in a minute."

"Come, dearie! I want you! I want you sairly."

And when she came, he said, "Sit down by me, Thyra. For a long time Donald has seen you have been in trouble, and you have never told him. Now he must know. He will not sleep, and he will not eat, till you tell him *all*. Kiss me, dearie! Tell me—tell Donald *all* about it."

Then Thyra told him everything. She described

her father and her father's house; and Robert Thorson, whom, she said, she had intended to marry until Hector came. And little by little the whole story was revealed, even to the broken wedding, and the burning of her bridal dress, and her flight from the *Indian Queen*. Donald was powerfully impressed. He had often read such tragic stories, but here was the heroine of one sitting by his side, holding his hand and bending her lovely face to his pitying embrace. Till the clock struck four they sat together, going into many sides of the matter; Thyra opening all her heart to the loving child, who listened with pity and wonder, and asked questions without end.

During this midnight revelation, Donald learned all about Thyra's childhood—all about the brave seaman, her father; the voyages he had taken, the wonders he had seen, the fights he had won. He could see the great room in her home full of stuffed birds, and marvelous shells, and carved ivories, and curious boxes and porcelain; and above all the full-rigged ship which stood in its glass case on the fine Indian lacquered stand. For a moment or two he was in an enthusiasm of joy, when Thyra said:

“Thou shalt go with me when the summer comes, and I will show thee these things, and thou shalt live in my father's house till the end of August, and then I will bring thee home again. The journey will not be hard in one of thy uncle's vessels, and when we are in Orkney, Robert Thorson could carry thee like a

pillow, and he would take thee in his boat to see the fishing, and the seals, and it might be to a whale hunt——”

“Oh, dearie, dearie!” he answered in a sobbing voice, “can you not see that I am wearing away so quick that I’ll not be here in the summer. You will go to Kirkwall without your wee Donald. He will be far away, but he will be thinking of you. Oh, dearie! I am going a long, long journey—I wish you could go with me!”

“I wish I could! I wish I could, Donald!” and she kissed him, and they were silent a little while, but only to renew the conversation in another phase. After the clock struck four, they slept a little, but both were awake early, and Donald opened his eyes with a surge of anger against Hector MacDonald. He had no pity for him. He wondered that Thyra could care about his suffering. He said to himself, “He is a proud, conceited creature; and he must also be a fool to put Sara MacArgall, with her red hair and white face, before Thyra, who is the bonniest woman in the world. My father says that, too, and he knows about beauty, as well as all other things.”

This confidence was a new tie between Thyra and Donald; and he prided himself a good deal on it. He was the only person Thyra had told her trouble to, consequently he was her passionate sympathizer. A new tenderness came into his voice and manner toward

her; he felt that he was her friend in a very special manner; and he was not sorry that Hector had fallen into the hands of the English. "They will give him what he deserves! They will cut off his head, and cut out his heart—and all the rest of it—and then, perhaps, he will remember a few things he has forgotten. No doubt, he has wished himself in Orkney ere this—no doubt—let him!"

And it was in just such a mood Sara found him one morning a few days after Culloden. She was the image of despairing anguish, and Donald had a moment's pity for her. But his childish partisanship admitted of no half-affections. Anyone who had wronged Thyra, or made Thyra weep, was beyond his sympathy. He hardened his little heart against Sara, and received her advance with marked coldness and reserve. She was distressed at his attitude. She had just left Lady Fraser, who for a long time had refused to listen to her entreaties for help. At last, however, moved by a sorrow so great, she had wept with her, and advised an application to Donald.

"If there is a mortal living who can win over Fraser," she said, "it is Donald! If you can get Donald to ask his father, you will, doubtless, save your husband," she said.

This was the only, the very last hope for Hector, and Sara took it with sorrowful avidity. "I will go to him now," she answered, "and if I cannot manage the boy, will you come and help me?"

“I have not much influence over him, but there is Thyra—I mean Miss Varrick—have you seen her? Donald would lay his life down to please Thyra Varrick.”

So Sara went upstairs to Donald, and was chilled at the outset by his far-offness. He looked, not at her, but at some point in his imagination. He was thinking of Thyra, and of her false lover in the dungeon at Carlisle; seeing also Thyra's home by the great waters full of seals. Robert Thorson was with him, and the wonderful Captain Varrick—and if Thyra's dream could only come true—perhaps he really might go to Orkney—who could tell?—and at this reflection Sara entered.

Her unrestrained weeping annoyed him, and yet gratified him. She had been part of Hector's cruelty, and he did not very clearly exonerate her. So he said but a cold “Good-morning,” and added, “If it please you, get a chair, madame; I cannot well walk, and Miss Varrick is not near by.”

“No, no, Donald!” she answered, “let me kneel at your feet. I am come to ask my husband's life from you.”

“You will be asking more than I can give.”

“Do not say that; for God's sake, do not say that!”

“It is to God you should go——”

“God has nothing to do with such barbarities as the English are committing. They are of the devil.”

"And I have no friendship with the devil. I would not ask my own life from him."

"Donald Fraser, don't play with my misery. You know the Stuarts have fallen."

"I am not caring for them; bad men, one and all, and this Prince Charlie just what Lord Elcho called him,—‘an Italian Scoundrel,’—and worse. He, doubtless, said ‘Coward.’"

"I am not asking any favor for the Stuarts; I have lost all for them. Donald, my grandfather died at the head of his clan; my brother Revan was cut down while trying to get the flying men together: nearly three hundred of the MacArgalls lie on the cursed moor of Culloden."

"Charles Stuart ought to lie in the van of them; maybe then he might win a little respect. He ought to be dead. He ought to be lying on that cursed moor with the thousand good men who were faithful to him. But he is running away—hiding himself—taking care o' himself—he is worthy to die the death of a traitor, and I hope the English will get him—yes, I do!"

"But Hector MacDonald did not run away; he stayed in Carlisle when he knew it was certain death."

"Aye, I am feared he will have to thole it all—beheading—and—the rest of it."

"Oh, save him, Donald; save him! I am nearly distracted. Donald, he has your own name; speak a

word to your father for him. One word from your father to Duncan Forbes will save Hector."

"I am sorry I cannot speak it, madame. It is not right for me to save such a wicked man."

"But Hector is not wicked. Oh, no! He has done no wrong but love Charles Stuart too well."

"Aye, but he has loved one good, dear woman too little. He has that! He is a bad man. He has nearly broken the heart of a woman that he promised to marry. He was within two minutes of marrying her."

"That is not true, Donald. I do not believe it."

"I know the woman myself, Mrs. MacDonald."

"Then why did he not marry her?"

"She had a wise father, and he carried her away from him."

"Then Hector was not to blame."

"Yes, he was, for he promised to go to the end of the world after her, and he just hired a boat, and went his way straight to yourself."

"Say it was so; why should you care for this woman?"

"I love her. She is my dearest friend. If I live, I am going to marry her—when I am a man——"

"And because Hector left her, you are going to let Hector die!"

"Yes, he is going to get the death he deserved."

"No, no! You will save him. If you let him die, Donald, you will be a murderer; for a word or two of

yours to your father can save him. Do you think God will take the reason you give me for not saying that word or two?"

"I think he will."

"For Christ's sake save Hector. You cannot save the other poor fellows, but it is given into your hand to save Hector. If you could have heard the Master of Meldrum, who escaped to us, tell of that awful field of slaughter!—of my grandfather, and my brother hacked to pieces, yet carried tenderly in their plaids by the remnant of the clan, back to MacArgall. Donald, they laid the two last chiefs of MacArgall side by side on our desolate hearth; and for a day and a night cried the death song over them. It is all desolation now at MacArgall. I have no one left to love me or care for me but Hector. I am without friends, without home——"

"You have Lady Gordon."

"She is dying."

"Poor woman!"

"I am the poorest, most sorrowful woman in the world. You were not content with that. You must tell me a thing about my husband that made all other griefs a hundred times harder to bear. Very few people would have chosen the hour when I was nearly broken-hearted to strike me afresh. Oh, Donald, you are cruel! How have I offended you?" and she buried her face, and sobbed until Donald's heart was throbbing wildly to his emotion.

"I cannot thole your grief," he said, a trifle impatiently, for he felt the tears on his own face, "I cannot thole it! Stand up, madame. It hurts me! It hurts me! I will tell you what I can do. The woman Hector MacDonald wronged is here. It is Miss Varrick. If she says I must ask for your husband's life—I will do it."

"All Heaven thank and bless you for your words! Will you call Miss Varrick? Let me go to her——"

"No, no! I will not have Thyra forced in any way—neither by words nor tears. She shall say the 'yes' or 'no' that is in her heart, and no other."

"But you will let me ask her? I want to tell her—to explain to her——"

"I will give her the facts myself."

Then he touched a little bell at his side, and in a few minutes Thyra answered it. She also had been weeping. She knew well that it was in the power of Lord Fraser to save Hector. She knew also that Lady Fraser did not dare to ask his interference. She, of all women, could not assume the place Hector's wife ought to take; but she had often considered Donald as a possible intercessor; she was considering him in that light when his summons called her from such mournful meditation. Therefore, she was quite prepared for his curt question:

"Thyra, would you like Hector MacDonald to die

the death of a traitor? You know well what a big traitor he is. Or, shall I ask my father to save him. It is to be as you wish."

Then Thyra looked at Sara, who stood grief-stricken and white as death before her. Her large, blue eyes were a prayer, her silence the most pathetic eloquence, her hands, slightly outstretched, were so sensitively imploring that Thyra felt as if they touched her. There was a moment's painful pause, for something—Thyra knew not what—held her very life in suspense. Her face was set and still; her lips would not move, her eyes dropped, she was breathless, motionless, speechless. Sara could not bear her impassive, inscrutable air; she fell on her knees by the sofa, with a low, bitter cry. One could believe that hearts broke with just such a cry.

It was the spell needed to release the noblest element in Thyra. She answered the cry with one as full of hope as Sara's had been of despair. She sank down beside her, encircled her with her arms, drew her face toward her own, kissed her cold lips, and said, as she did so: "I do not blame thee; I do not! He is thy husband. For thy sake, I will ask any favor—for thy sake!"

Then she rose, and went to Donald, and said, "My darling Donald, wilt thou ask Lord Fraser that the life of Hector MacDonald be saved? It is my wish. It will be a great comfort to me."

Donald answered her petition with a queer, loving



SHE FELL ON HER KNEES.

smile. "You women are astonishing creatures!" he said; then to Sara, "Will you come near me, madame? I want to see your face." And Sara rose, and stood beside Thyra, and Thyra let her arm slip around the wretched wife—for she looked fit to faint—and said softly, "Thou mayst lean on me, in every way." Very gratefully Sara looked into the face of her helper; and Donald, though he did not hear Thyra's words, understood their purport to be mercy and loving kindness. He was tender-hearted, yet he felt his power; and he wished others, also, to recognize it. There was so little in life he could do that this opportunity was a great event to him. He had life and death in his small hands, and it was a solemn thing to balance.

"You must understand, the both of you must understand," he said, "that Major MacDonald's life is in Thyra Varrick's will, not in mine. I think, myself, the man isn't fit to live; but if Thyra says 'Let him live,' then I will say to my father 'Let him live,' and my father will say to Duncan Forbes 'Let him live,' and that will settle the matter."

"Dearest Donald," said Thyra, "I ask you with all my heart for the life of Major MacDonald. Do not refuse me. I wish him to live."

"I will do aught to pleasure you, Thyra; so I will speak to my father to-night, and I will ask him to waste no time in making sure what I now promise—the earlier the welcomer. You can both leave me now.

I am weary with woman's sorrow. It is worse to thole than pain."

Then Sara leaned toward him, and he let her kiss him, but cut short her thanks, saying, they could wait "till Hector's feet were on the heather again." And he closed his eyes, and looked so tired, that both Sara and Thyra went softly out of the room together. In the hall Sara's chair was waiting, and here the weeping wife turned to Thyra, and, with an air of proud humility, said:

"I must take my husband from your hands—but the gift is so noble—so precious—I—I——" She did not finish the sentence, but in passionate weeping stepped into her chair, and covered her face. Thyra was chilled; at the last Sara had allowed her to see how keenly she felt the mortification of her position, and Thyra had not wished this result. She had, indeed, done her best to prevent it. Donald also was a little impossible all day long. The thing he had promised troubled him till it was accomplished; for he knew his father's will, and he was going to disobey it. As it happened, Lord Fraser was in a very cheerful mood; he wanted a game of whist, he said, and could stay a couple of hours for it. And he insisted on Thyra taking a walk in the lovely gloaming. It was distressing to interfere with this happy temper, but it had to be done. There was no shirking or put-off in Donald's nature; he went straight to the point at once.

“Father,” he said, “I have another game to play with you to-night; the chess-board can stand a while. There is a man’s life at stake, and I am not caring to be guilty of his blood.”

“Oh, Donald! Donald! You, too! I thought I was safe in this room. You have no friends among the rebels?”

“Aye, but I have an enemy. We are told to love our enemies. I can’t do that, but maybe I can save his life—if you will help me. I am losing the grip of my own life—whiles, you will have dreamed of that feeling—losing your grip and falling backward into the void. Then you wake up with a start, and you have the grip all right——”

“Donald, my boy, it is cruel to turn my love into a sword, and then pierce my very soul with it. You are not ‘losing your grip,’ you are not ‘falling into the void,’ and you have no enemy.”

“I was wrong one way, father. If I lose my grip, and fall, it will not be into the void; it will be into the arms of the Everlasting God. But I have an enemy, for all that wrong Thyra wrong me; and the man whose life I beg has been cruel to my dearie.”

Then Donald told his father Thyra’s history, just as she had told it to him—all about her home and Orkney life, her relations with Robert Thorson and Hector MacDonald, her interrupted marriage, and her flight. And the astute man of the world, with his great, kindly heart, understood what Donald could

not explain. Such portions of this story as Thyra had made known to Mr. Reid, he already knew; but Hector's part in Thyra's flight was new to him. He was much interested, and before Donald had finished his plea, he had concluded to grant his request.

"This is a peculiar case," he said in reply. "We owe Thyra Varrick so much, and if she yet cares for the man——"

"She does not care for him now; she would not be a wicked girl like that—she told me so—but she is sorry for his wife."

"To be sure, that is right. And I think the MacDonalds may ask some favor from the Government; for if they had fought at Culloden, as they were expected to do, there would have been a different story to tell. The young man, you say, is at Carlisle?"

"Ay, he is there; and it is something to his credit he stopped there. He at least obeyed orders; there were others who did not."

"I know. Well, Donald, you may tell Thyra that for your sake——"

"No, for her sake."

"For her sake I will beg this MacDonald's life. And in return, you are to talk no more about 'losing the grip' on your own life."

"Father, you surely see that I am wearing away as fast as the days go by. I can hardly lift my tea-cup now; my books are heavy, 'tis a week since I could turn the globe, and even Thyra's reading wearies me.

We will have to say 'good-by' soon, my own, good, darling father! Very soon now—and I would like this business settled. It is all I can do now to please my Thyra."

"I will see to it at once, Donald. Your pleasure is before all other things to me."

Then with a heavenly smile the little fellow put his arms round his father's neck, and whispered, "You are the image of 'Our Father which art in Heaven.' I am not a bit feared for fathers; they have more love than can last eternity. Carry me a few minutes, dear." And the strong man lifted the child, and was shocked to find him but an infant's weight in his arms, and in that sacred hour the bitterness of death was understood and suffered by both.

When he was laid back again on his sofa, Donald said, "You see, there will be no more games of chess, father, I cannot think of the moves——"

"You have played a far grander game, Donald—and won it, too, my dear, dear laddie. I will see to that."

A few weeks after this event, on one hot summer night, when Donald was very feeble, word came to him that Hector and Sara were downstairs, and would like to see him. He looked at Thyra with the question in his eyes; and she said:

"It will be to tell thee how much they thank thee. Dost thou care for such words? They will only weary thee."

"There is Hector," he whispered; "he may want to see you——"

"I will not see him—never, never again! If he comes here, I will go out of the house—what does he come here for? It is a shame!"

"He shall not come nigh us. Send word that I am glad he is free—and God be thanked!" Then he wandered away—as he often did in these days—to places far off; to Thyra's home, and to the lands of his hopes and his imaginations.

Hector's release, and very easily conditioned pardon, was the last earthly circumstance in which Donald took any interest. Soon afterward he went away forever. A solemn calm, a certain conscious grandeur of victory over death and the grave was in his departure. For some days he had had celestial visions; and his soul—turned from earth—caught glimpses of Heaven, and tasted of the powers of the world to come. Tears were not for Donald. None that loved him would have recalled him; no, not for a moment. And if asked, "How is it with the child?" they would have answered in sorrow triumphant over death:

" 'Tis well;

Nor would we any miracle
Should stir our sleeper's tranquil trance;
Or plague his painless countenance.
We would not any seer might place
His staff on our Immortal's face.
Or lip to lip, and eye to eye,
Charm back his pale mortality.
No, Shunamite! We would not break
God's stillness. Let them weep, who wake.' "

CHAPTER XIII

Thyra Goes Back to Orkney

WHEN Donald was in his grave Thyra became restless. She awoke one morning as from a dream, and the sea called her. She heard its magical murmur through all her ear chambers; she felt its mighty throb in all her pulses, and the tide of her life set steadily northward.

"I must go home! I must go home!" she said to herself; and the idea became every hour more and more insistent. But she could not begin her journey with the haste she desired; there were things to attend to which could not be done in an hour; and with this reflection she took from the leaves of her Bible a letter that had been wet with the tears of both the dead and the living. And once more she kissed and re-read it.

MY DEARIE!

I will be far away from you when my father gives you this bit of paper. I have a wish, a great wish, Thyra; it is, that you take with you to Orkney all my books and pictures, and the great globe we have traveled the world o'er on, and, in special, the picture of myself that Leslie Crawford painted. I want you to put all these dear things in your own room there; the room that overlooks the tangle-covered rocks where the seals sun themselves; and the sea on which the big ships come and go, by night and day. They were *our* books, and *our* pictures, and it was *our*

globe; and if you will still love and care for them, dearie, even up in heaven I will be gladder for the thought of it. And in the Bank of Edinburgh I have eight hundred pounds and seventeen shillings; now it is all yours. All I have is yours. I will never forget my dearie, never, never!"

Then there had evidently been a burst of grief, for his name, "Donald Fraser," was blurred and written in tears.

They were Donald's last wishes, and Thyra could not resist a word of them. Besides, Lord and Lady Fraser's entreaties were added to the child's, so that when she decided to return to Orkney there was considerable packing to do. But in a week she was on the sea, and Edinburgh had passed out of her life forever. It had been a wonderful episode, and she sat on the deck of the tossing ship recalling it. She had come to the great city poor, friendless, and with no change of clothing; she was going home with treasures of books and pictures, with gold in her name, and trunks full of rich and beautiful things that Lady Fraser had filled unknown to her. And, better than all, she carried with her an imperishable friendship, and the memory of a love sweet and innocent, and sure to be faithful even beyond the grave.

She landed at Kirkwall soon after sunrise, but the Dominie was an early riser, and she was going to the manse first of all. As she came to it, she saw him leaning over the gate, smoking; and she was conscious that he was watching her approach with a

curiosity gradually turning to certainty. Indeed, before she had time to speak, he cried out, "Thyra! Thyra Varrick! Is it really thee?"

She smiled her answer into his face, and they went into the manse together. Then she gave him a letter from Lord Fraser containing a generous memorial sum of money for the Kirk, to be spent according to Donald's wish—"for the wives and children of drowned fishermen." A great deal was said in this letter about Thyra, and the Dominie looked again at the girl to see what manner of woman she had become.

"Lord and Lady Fraser write more good of thee, Thyra, than I think any mortal can deserve; but it is plain thou hast done well; and through this well-doing has come this wonderful help to our poor widows and fatherless bairns. Surely, the Lord has been with thee, and brought thee back to thy home with thy hands full of blessings. What can I do for thee?"

"There is much thou canst do. Thy favor will make my way plain and easy till my father comes back."

"Thou hast won that, and I will give it to thee freely. What is thy plan? And where wilt thou live?"

"I want first the keys of my father's house. He left them with thee. I am going to put it in order. He may be home very soon now."

"Thou canst not live alone. Come and stay at the manse. Kirsty Vennel is here, and she will look to thy comfort."

"I thank thee, but I am going now to Maran Flett's. She will come and stay with me."

"Mistress Flett is ready to go to Fife. She has sold her house and furniture to Alexander Fae, who is to marry Jorunna Beaton. But she does not give possession till Thursday; so thou canst still see her in her old home."

Thyra was uneasy at this change. She had made all her calculations relying on Maran's protection and company, and she was troubled at the thought of their failure. As soon as she reached the place she saw a change. The garden was uncared for, and the house door stood wide open. Thyra entered it with a calmness that surprised, that almost frightened her. There was the narrow stairway down which she had come that wretched evening in her bridal gown! She stood on the very spot where she had seen her lover struggling vainly with the men who were binding him. A little further down the passage she could see yet the stern, dark face of her angry father as he called her; and she was as calm and indifferent as if she had read the story in a book, and had nothing to do with the tragedy. That was the wonder of it! How could she be so cold to events which had once been more than life and death to her?

In a few moments she saw Maran coming toward

her. She had a teapot in one hand, and a plate of broiled fish in the other; and when she saw Thyra she threw up her hands with a scream, and the tea and fish were scattered at her feet. The next moment they had kissed each other, and Maran was looking with wondering admiration at Thyra.

“And you are wearing ‘blacks’?” she cried. “Is your father dead?—or are they for one we won’t name? Go ben and take off your things; my head is all in a swoon, but I’ll be here anon with more tea and fish—I’ll warrant you’re needing something to eat, after a week on the water.”

In a short time breakfast was ready, and they sat down to eat and to talk.

“I hear you have been living with lords and ladies, and eating, of course, of the rich and the sweet, and dressing like—ah, weel, it is easy seen by the look of you that Mally Paterson hasna had the making o’ your clothes.”

“The Dominie was telling me thou art leaving Kirkwall. What for, Maran?”

“There is a great falling away in the pleasure of the place,” she said. “I missed yourself more than I can tell, and others didna take your place. I had no word of your coming back here, and I thought of the sociable Fife villages till I was so homesick. I saw nothing for it but just going back to where I came from.”

“But I want thee, Maran. My father may be

back any time, and I have brought a store of valuable and beautiful things with me; and who but you can help me to unpack and arrange them. Do stay with me just till father comes."

Maran was not hard to persuade. She had a great longing to see the treasures Thyra had brought with her, and the idea of a house to clean and put orderly was a great temptation to her. The women who had been unneighborly and offish would be on pins and needles to see the "wonderfuls" Thyra had brought with her, and she perceived in a moment what opportunities for little triumphs and revenges her position as Thyra's friend and helper would give her. So with little persuasion she agreed to remain with Thyra until Captain Varrick returned.

This point settled, Maran became more personally inquisitive. She wanted to know the "how-it-happened" of everything. "We have heard this and that of your doings in Edinburgh," she said. "Thomas Baikie, who was there between ship and ship, says it is an awful wicked city, is Edinburgh. He saw the English soldiers marching to the kirk—on the Lord's day, mind you—to their own band of music, and thinking it no disgrace. And the mob of people there, and their rampaging and unreasonableness, he says, is past speaking of. He heard, too, of the entering in of Charles Stuart, and how the city went mad, and flung what sense it had under the feet of the mob. What did you see of all this?"

"I saw a great deal more than I ever want to see again."

"Poor Scotland! It was her last chance, and she has lost it. We shall just have to put up with English kings and English laws."

"Lord Fraser says the laws are very good."

"Even so; but the Episcopal bishops have a hand in their making, and I am not sure in my mind whether good Presbyterians ought to obey them—bishops, ye ken—however, there are better things to talk about. Did you see Hector MacDonald at all?"

"I was at his wedding."

"Never! Never! And who did the false loon marry?"

"Miss MacArgall, daughter of the Chief of Clan Argall. She was his own kind."

"Doubtless; birds of a feather fly together, and better so; yet it makes my corruption rise to hear of such ways. It is a black, burning shame!"

"No. I am contented. I had the best of things afterward. She is a beautiful woman."

"She is the man's choice—such like as it is—but tell me all about the matter."

It was no short story, interrupted, as it was, by Maran's constant comments, questions, and opinions; so that when the clock struck eleven the two women were still sitting with the teapot between them, in delightful conversation. Maran was in a mood of unqualified triumph. Thyra was really enjoying her-

self hugely; but there is no reason to think worse of their long gossip than that it was the natural relief of hearts not able to crush down all feeling under the crust of more or less culture.

When the clock's striking broke into their confidential outpouring, Thyra rose quickly. "The boxes will be coming up to the house, Maran; I must away. Surely thou wilt come with me."

The temptation was far beyond Maran's power to resist. Boxes to unpack—the house to refurnish and readorn—two servant lassies to order; and the women visitors to astonish, and snub, and settle old scores with! Oh, the outlook was entirely too delightful to be refused!

"I shall come with you, Thyra," she answered. "What for no. I have aye been a mother to you, dear lass, and you'll need me more now than ever—while you are settling yourself. But I tell you plainly, I'll away as soon as I hear tell of Cousin Paul coming. I would not meet him for all the gold in Scotland after yonder utterly unspeakable business of Hector MacDonald. So say or do as you like; when I hear Paul is coming, you will hear Maran Flett is going." Then, after some directions about her own belongings, Maran went with Thyra to the Varrick house.

The Dominie had opened it, and men were toiling up the hill with Thyra's big boxes. Here and there they passed groups of curious women watching the

passing of the packing cases and speculating as to what could be in them. "The captain has, doubtless, come home again, and these will be the 'wonderfuls' he has brought from pagan countries," was one opinion. But this supposition was made provocative of pleasant discussion by the visible and officious pride of Mistress Flett. For those who knew her best declared, "She was leaving Orkney for Fife solely because the time for Paul Varrick's return was at hand; she being simply terrified to meet him." And this conviction was so positive that the majority of people had no doubt of Paul's death, and that, in consequence, Thyra had "come into money" and was going to share her fortune with her friend Maran.

Thyra walked through the town to her homewithout noticing anyone; Maran bowed and smiled and made her condescending kindness apparent and obnoxious. It was a relief to find the Dominie in the house directing things, and Maran, having brought her servant with her, began instantly the pleasant business of setting kitchen affairs to work. "And first of all, Vara," she called, "you be to bring fire to this hearthstone; a house without a fire on the hearth is a poor place." Then Thyra turned to the hearth and saw the ashes of her mother's bridal dress still lying there. Her heart swelled, and if she had been alone she must have wept over so sad and painful a memory; but the room was full of sailor-men handling boxes, and the Dominie was there, and Maran seemed to be everywhere

present and audible. So she only prevented Vara removing the poor remains. It was better they should burn away and vanish into the elements than be thrown out with the dust and litter of two years. And she watched them carefully till the flames had caught the poor scorched remnants, and there was no longer a scrap of that sorrow left on the relighted hearth.

Then came some marvelously happy days for both women, and for others also, especially for the Dominie. With the unpacking of the boxes Lady Fraser had sent he had little to do; and yet he could not help wondering and admiring at the exquisite clothing, the toilet delicacies, the sea and land gowns, the morning and evening house-gowns, the kirk gowns, and bonnets and mantillas that were taken out of these wooden receptacles. There were things, too, in them which he had never seen before; for instance, a little lavender parasol with an ivory handle. Oh, it was impossible even for the Dominie to restrain his curiosity and pleasure. How, then, could the two amazed servant-girls bear the burden of all this finery alone? They could not. They told the story of it to everyone they saw, and these again to others, and Maran was filled with satisfied pride when there was granted her the privilege of "asking in" or "not asking in" the numerous feminine visitors who called to welcome Miss Varrick home again. For her invitations or refusals meant something far more than the "at home"

or "not at home" of our day. Behind each smiling "Come in, mistress" there was a memory of some kind notice when Maran was decidedly out of favor; and behind each "Miss Varrick isna caring to see folk to-day" there was, perhaps, a keener memory of some slighting look or word, or some positive bit of ill-nature. Justly and scrupulously she paid her debts both of kindness and unkindness; and these acts of gratitude and reprisal were rendered all the more important by the fact that the Dominie was generally present. If they were received they were taken by Maran to see all they wished to see, and afterward, perhaps, had the privilege of watching the Dominie unpack a box of pictures or books, listen to his comments, and then share a pot of tea with him and Miss Varrick and Mistress Flett. These were not unimportant pleasures and honors to the simple women who sought them; they were of the highest importance and eagerly looked after; so that the unadmitted declared scornfully, "Some folks thought as much of going to Thyra Varrick's house as of going to the court of the King of England."

It was the Dominie who hung Donald's pictures, and who made the shelves for Donald's books and arranged them thereon. And it took him a long time to find the proper light for each picture, and the proper place for each book. Indeed, he was in no hurry with the work. It delighted him. He spent mornings and afternoons over a single volume, and

there was a painting of Christ sitting weary and thirsty and humanly sorrowful by the well of Samaria that he never tired of looking at.

Finally the house was finished. From door to door, from garret to cellar, it was in the spotless order Maran loved. For, it must be admitted, Thyra had far less of the passion for housekeeping than Maran, whose particularity about unseen places had often been a little wearisome. But when all was over the sense of absolute purity, everywhere, was a great compensation. By this time the summer was passed and no word had come from Captain Varrick. In another month none was expected. The Pentland Firth was then lashed by furious storms, and the days in which a boat could live on it were few and far between. Captain Varrick was sure to cruise the winter through in some more profitable climate. So Maran settled down for the next six months in Orkney, and life became orderly and, in the main, very happy and socially pleasant.

Maran, in any case, would be mistress in any house in which she dwelt, but it was with Thyra's full consent she now took entirely on herself the management of their domestic affairs. For the girl had learned too much in Edinburgh not to desire to learn more; and she had too long been absolved from the labor of cooking and cleaning and household affairs willingly to resume a charge so constant and so little to her liking. So Maran looked after the house and the meals

and managed the servants, and haggled with the fishwives and tradesmen, and, in fact, ruled in all things pertaining to domestic and social life. Thyra was studying history and geography and other neglected information with the Dominic, and reading over and over again with him the books she had read with Donald. On fine afternoons they often walked together, and in the evenings she taught him to play chess, the board they used being the very one on which Donald had taught Thyra the same game.

When the days were stormy and no visitors could reach them, there was a wealth of subjects for the two women to talk over. Maran was never tired of hearing about Edinburgh and Prince Charles—for whom she had a secret, sentimental affection, conscientiously suppressed—about Lord and Lady Fraser and, above all, about Donald. Sometimes, but not often, only when the storm was fiercer than usual, they would fall into conversation about Hector, and Sara, and their wedding, with all things pertaining to it; Maran being always painfully anxious to hear again how Thyra was dressed, and if she looked beautiful enough to plant a thorn of regret in her false lover's heart.

It was after one of these "past" confidences that Thyra suddenly said, "Maran, I have been home two months and you have not named Robert Thorson. Is he dead? Tell me the truth. Did Hector kill him?"

“Dead! Not he. I was waiting till you gave me the word. The Dominie told me to do so. He said it was Robert’s wish that when you came back no one was to trouble you with his name. But there is lots to tell about him, and I would just like to tell it, and be by with the subject.”

“What has the Dominie to do with Robert Thorson?”

“Wait, and I’ll make you as wise as myself.”

Then Thyra heard for the first time how Hector and Robert had chased each other for two weeks, and how Robert had finally given his enemy his life, and so put an end to circumstances otherwise likely to end fatally to one or both. In this relation Thyra, at first, saw only the personal wrong to herself.

“He was running after Robert when he ought to have been following me,” she said angrily. “His revenge was more to him than his love. I am glad he did go to Sara MacArgall. I wish Robert had killed him! He ought to have done so!”

“You are far wrong. You are speaking in your haste, Thyra; and you will mend your words yet. Robert, after leaving Hector pinned to the ground—and he ought to have put him in it——”

“True! That is what I said.”

“It was a lapse—well, well, this or that, after he had decided to let the man live, Robert went to the Dominie. He had resolved to go away from Orkney,

and he had some messages and papers to leave in his keeping. But as he was talking the good man saw Robert was very ill, and he said, 'You are not fit for anything, Robert; you cannot go away; you must stop here at the manse; you cannot have inflammation of the lungs in a cottage full of peat smoke! I won't permit it.' And Robert was too far spent to make any opposition; in an hour he was clear out of his senses. And so he remained for a long time, for typhoid fever came on top of all, and Robert Thorson lay at death's door so long that everybody thought he must slip within it.

"However, at the long last, he won back to life again. And it seems, while he was out of his head, he talked some queer language that no one understood but which was just French and Italian and Greek that he had picked up when he was in the Mediterranean trade. And the Dominie found out he was gay clever at picking up strange talk, and while he was getting well he put him clean through the Latin grammar, and then Robert began to hanker after the Greek, and to amuse himself with what they call mathematics—for he knew a little that way—and the Dominie watched him with wonder and—well, the long and short of it was, he persuaded Robert to leave the sea and go to college, and took him there himself and made all easy for him. Faix! there was little need to do that; Robert Thorson has made a wide road for his own steps. He has taken degrees, and honors,

and what not; and now he is in for the theological course. Think of that!"

"Was it to Edinburgh College he went?"

"Edinburgh! No, indeed! He went to the best in the land, to Marischal College itself; and I was hearing that Colin Maclaurin, the greatest mathematician of them all, had taken wonderfully to Robert. Edinburgh! No, no! When it comes to colleges you can't even Edinburgh with the famous Marischal College o' Aberdeen! Robert had money saved in plenty, and he is making more, now, teaching, and the like of it. They say he is on an easy footing with all the professors there—that stands to reason, for he is a clever creature, is Robert. He'll be having 'Reverend' before his name, or more like 'Doctor' before long; indeed, I'm not sure myself if he is not a 'Doctor' already."

"Has he ever been back here?"

"Of course he has. He was here last June, but I never changed words with him. I heard everyone talking and kept my whist. He spoke in the kirk for what they call the Missionary Society, and just took Dominie and elders and whole congregation off their feet. He made them feel as if they wanted to leave father and mother, and wife and bairns, and boats and nets, and go without scrip or scrap to preach Christ to the miserable pagan creatures who never heard tell of him."

"Did thou feel that way, Maran?"

“There are aye ‘excepts,’ and I was one o’ the excepts. But the next day, when folks had come to their reason again, a good many were of my mind; for as Elder Grimm said—‘It was a grand vision of the possibilities of the coming kirk, but perfect unreasonableness for the time being.’ However, there is no doubt that Robert Thorson is an extraordinary speaker; and he made a most weighty prayer. Everyone allowed that.”

“Was he dressed like a Dominie, or was he in common clothes?”

“Not just common, ye ken; he had a white band on, and a black coat, but no tails to it; just a jacket like. Some folks saw him walking with the Dominie in his University gown and cap, but he was cordial and friendly to all: in and out of the boats, and slipping on his ‘oils’ quite natural for the deep-sea fishing. There was a little differ about his theology, and some of the old settled men were not liking his talk about the general and universal mercy of God. Elder Beaton thought such remarks dangerous; and the Dominie himself allowed that a judicious minister of the Word would keep his thumb well down on such a limitless doctrine of grace. But the women, Thyra! You should have seen them bowing and courtesying to him! I was perfectly annoyed at their foolishness. Mortal idiots, all of them!”

Thyra made no comments, but she took the story

into her heart, and it, doubtless, influenced her future conduct. She gave herself to study with a new zest, and, in a moderate way, the Dominie was proud of her. So the winter passed, and in the spring they had a letter from Mr. Reid saying that Captain Varrick would, no doubt, be home during the ensuing summer. Maran was sorry to hear it; she was so busy and happy and important, she wanted life to remain just as it was.

One day in June Thyra was going to the manse with the books necessary for her lessons in her hand, and when she reached the gate she saw the Dominie walking slowly away from it. A gentleman with the appearance of a minister was with him, and Thyra knew at once that it was Robert Thorson. She stepped hastily behind a thick bush and stood there till they had sauntered out of sight. Then she went home with a new ache in her heart. The Dominie, like all others, forgot her when there was anyone else to talk to. And she did think they might have come to see her first of all. She was ready to cry, and, finding Maran busy in the kitchen, she did go to her room and have a little stormy interview with herself. Then she dressed with great care and waited. Neither Robert nor the Dominie came near the house, but in the evening Maran said:

“Marena was telling me a queer story about the Dominie and Robert Thorson being together. I’m not believing it, though she says her brother saw them

go off to sea in Magnus Yell's boat. Marena isn't to be trusted, however; it will be a flight of her own."

"I saw them together this morning, Maran. I was sure they would come here, and I would not spoil your surprise."

"They'll be here anon. Yell's boat is a slow creature, and would wait for the tide."

But day after day passed and there was the same blank between the manse and the Varrick house. Thyra would not go out at all, lest she should meet Robert on the street, for it was evident he did not want to renew his acquaintance with her. On one evening, however, Robert was to speak in the kirk, and Maran said they must go or be a town's talk, and reluctantly Thyra acknowledged this position. The crowd, however, was so great, she hoped personal contact might be avoided; and yet she longed for it—only to clasp his hand, only a word or a look would be sufficient for her happiness.

These were her thoughts as she took her old place in her father's pew and watched Robert enter. Always a composed, sedate man, he had put on with the sacred profession he had chosen a great dignity. His clothing was now ministerial, his voice had its old musical ring, but was beautifully modulated by his emotions; he was in every respect a man beyond the common; and Thyra had only one comfortable reflection as she looked at him—it was that she had

outgrown her old self quite as far as Robert had done.

But how was Robert to know this? It was impossible for her to take the initiative and go to the manse, and though the Dominie called once during the week of Robert's visit, he never named the young man. Thyra could not do so; she had been too positively "cut" to be the first to make advances; and Maran had several reasons for not interfering with events that suited her exactly. It was, however, a terrible week to Thyra; she walked her room hour after hour hoping, despairing, humiliated beyond endurance. She never could have believed that Robert Thorson would treat her so cruelly. She expected, until the last hour, that he would come and ask her once more the question he had been asking her ever since she was sixteen years old. Alas! alas! He went back to Aberdeen without a sign, and she felt that all was over. Robert had ceased to care for her—perhaps, indeed, he was promised to some other girl—and, as is often the case in love, the rejecter grew sick of love as the rejected got well.

Both Maran and Thyra blamed the Dominie. They felt that in some way he had been against them; and when he called next Thyra was sick and would not see him; but Maran was ready to speak, and she asked, almost immediately, "What for did Robert Thorson pass us by? He never came near Thyra. My certie! I cannot see through such ways!"

“Thou foolish woman! Canst thou see through anything, specially the ways of lovers?” asked the Dominie with a laugh.

“Lovers! Who said lovers? If the man had had a thimbleful of common-sense he might have known that the tide had turned and that he would get ‘yes’ where he once got ‘no.’”

“I do not believe that. Thyra did not come to the manse at her usual time the day after Robert arrived. We waited for her a good—or bad—hour; then I saw she had heard he was here and was not coming. And I felt angry at her and took Robert to the boats. When I returned home, Greta told me, as she was clearing away the breakfast dishes she saw Thyra come to the gate when we were not a dozen yards beyond it; and what did the proud lassie do? She hid herself behind the lilac bushes.”

“She did what was very womanlike, and I would think little of her if she had run skirling after you both. Now, I will tell you the way of it—that day Thyra was kept back a full hour by Marena, who had cut her finger nearly off as she was cleaning the fish, and as I canna bide the sight of blood, Thyra stayed with her till the worst was over. She told me when she came home that she saw you and Robert going off together, and the poor lassie thought you had gone out of her way, and she was most heart-broken. No wonder she hid herself from you. No wonder she kept her own home while he was in yours. What were you

saying to the man? Why didn't he come to see her? He is awfully set up with himself, anyhow."

"He is as modest as a child. I said only good things of Thyra—there was nothing else to say."

"You should have brought him here."

"Not I! When I thought Thyra had given him the backset as soon as he came I advised him to let her alone. Professor Thorson will not need to go begging for a wife now."

"If he wants Thyra Varrick for his wife he will have the proper amount of begging to do. He may swear that to himself. My word! What kind of a man is Professor Thorson that he should have a wife without asking her?"

"Never mind! We shall see."

"See what? See Thyra Varrick begging Professor Thorson's love? When that thing happens the fundamentals o' life will be in ruins. Ay, sir, even that. This stramash was his doing as much as hers."

"Maran!"

"It was; and Professor Thorson may think shame o' himself——"

"Maran, you are speaking evil of dignities."

"I'm not caring. I'm speaking of lovers that have had a quarrel—and you might have put all right——"

"Be quiet, Mistress Flett. When it was Robert Thorson the sailor I might have said, 'Put thy manhood in the dust if thou wantest the girl; thou canst

humor her now and rule her anon.' But when it is Professor Thorson, a man vowed to the service of the Lord God Almighty, I will not aid nor help in seeing such an one trailing his holy garments in the dust before a woman who does not know her own mind, and who has not sufficient estimation of the honor done her."

"You have made things ten times worse than they were."

"I am sorry, Maran." Then, seeing that Maran was growing more excited and likely to be more unreasonable, he lifted his hat and said "Good-afternoon, Mistress Flett." And his dignity frightened her; she understood she had gone too far and offended the Dominie; a social crime of such magnitude that she could find no excuse or consolation for it but by throwing the blame on Thyra, "the tiresomest lass, anent her love affairs," she ejaculated, "that ever a poor woman had the guiding of."

But she said nothing to Thyra of the Dominie's displeasure. She only told her "It was all a misunderstanding; that Robert had waited an hour for her and then concluded she did not wish to see him—and so—he had gone off to the boats most broken-hearted." The last sentence was of Maran's invention; but she had no conscientious scruples about it—he ought to have been broken-hearted if he wasn't; and I'll give him the credit of it—deserving or not, she thought.

And Thyra was silent through all the explanation; but at the end she said, "Misunderstanding! Nonsense! Love would have solved a misunderstanding. When Robert loved me he grieved—and forgave."

CHAPTER XIV

Thyra's Marriage

AFTER this, the summer went on not very happily. Thyra was stunned by her visible rejection, and her books lost their savor. She longed now for her father's home-coming, and began to wonder uneasily what she should do, if he never came back. Maran had complained often lately. She said, "Since Robert Thorson had passed them by, people had not come often to see them; and she was sure the Dominie was changed; anyone could see he had lost interest in Thyra." For Maran did not consider that it was Thyra who had lost interest; and that during the fishing season the Dominie was always much in the boats.

"I wish your father would come home, Thyra," Maran said irritably one morning; "I am fair sick for a sight of the 'auld neuk o' Fife.' There's few folk coming here now, and you are that pining and pinging I have little pleasure with you." Maran did not mean a tenth part of this complaint, but it hurt Thyra all the same; and tears were in her eyes, as she walked to the door and looked over the ocean.

There was a white-sailed little schooner coming

toward the harbor, and she watched it with wistful gaze. Someone was sailing her that knew how to do it. She was laying down to the breeze just enough to show she felt it; tossing the spray from her bows and lifting her head over the waves, as if she was just stepping over them. "I wish my father was at her helm! She goes just as if he was——" And then she turned sadly away as the hopelessness of the wish struck her. So she sat down on the doorstep, and began to think of the night she had sat thus waiting for her father—the night that Hector told her he loved her. And the morning waxed to noon; and she heard Maran scolding the girl who was setting the dinner table, and then suddenly—her father's whistle.

She did not speak, or call to Maran; she stood up, answered it, and waited for the second call. Then she flew down the path, and at the bottom of the hill she saw the weather-worn sailor stretching out his arms for her. Does anyone wonder what they said? Was there a word of reproach or contrition? There was no necessity for either. It was:

"Father! Father!"

"Thyra! Thyra!"

And in that heart-call love had forgiven everything. There was nothing left for explanation. All that had been wrong went into the crucible of a kiss and came out love.

Then, as they went to the house, Thyra told her father of Maran's kindness and asked oblivion for

her also; and Paul promised it and kept his word. When he entered his home Maran was fussing about Thyra's absence. She lifted her head, uttered a cry, and would have left the room, but Paul put his arm round her, thanked her for taking such good care of his little girl, and so completely buried the past, that before dinner was over Maran had quite recovered herself and was in tip-top feather and spirits.

And of course she received—and not unworthily—all the credit of the well-ordered home, and Paul begged her to stay till all his treasures were unpacked and put in place, an invitation warmly seconded by Thyra, who felt quite unable to copé with a rearrangement of what might be the whole house. Maran was not hard to entreat. She was, indeed, well pleased to have another such pleasant task on her hands, and, when the queer foreign cases were unpacked, willingly let Thyra go back to her books, and undertook the settlement of things again.

If she wanted help she got it from Paul or the Dominie, and Thyra often heard them laughing together over some blunder or some Indian oddity. There was no hurry about the new arrangement, and nobody made any hurry. The house and the meals went on with a beautiful regularity; and the arrangement of Paul's "wonderfuls" occupied delightfully the odds and ends of time not needed in domestic affairs. Dearly loving the order and the regularity of ship life, Captain Varrick appreciated, as Thyra

had never done, the well-cooked food served precisely at its proper moment; and the clean, tidy house, about which he never saw anyone making a fuss or a dust; and the unflagging attention paid to the small peculiarities which did so much to make life run smoothly.

But in spite of all appearances to the contrary Thyra was not happy. The contentment she had anticipated as certain with her father's return did not come. In no respect did she or could she bring back the life gone forever. And she did not fully realize that this change was mainly in herself. She had outgrown the conditions that in former years made her pleasure; and if precisely the same conditions could have environed her, they would not have given her satisfaction. Also, previously, she had been mistress in her home; not a very prompt or industrious one, but in spite of all delinquencies in her housekeeping she had ruled. She had been glad to escape the ceaseless care of the house, but she found that in delegating the labor to Maran she had also given away the authority that belonged to it. Her father consulted Maran—not her—about household affairs; and the servants went to Maran—not to her—for orders.

She felt that she had lost in this respect what it was impossible for her to regain. Maran held the reins with far too tight a hand to allow of any interference. Then there was the Dominie. Since the fishing began the lessons had ceased; and since Paul

returned, it was Paul who played chess with him, and not Thyra. Paul was an even antagonist; there was more interest in the game when the skill was equal. And there were many small grievances besides these great ones—little encroachments—little sacrifices of herself to Maran's honor and glory—little shows of authority, on Maran's part, quite unnecessary—little disobediences from the servants, who hardly recognized her position; and thinking over these things one night she said bitterly to herself:

"There is no one who really loves me. Oh, how I wish Robert Thorson was here! Father has never in his heart forgotten my fault, but Robert——" Then she remembered Robert's neglect of her, and she covered her face and was heart-sick.

"I must go away," she said. "I am not wanted here. The Dominie is sufficient for father. When Maran goes, after the fishing, I will go with her. I will write and ask Mr. Reid or Lady Fraser to find me another home. I cannot stay here—the place is hateful to me—I will speak to father about it—now."

She had left him smoking on the hearth, and he seldom now went out in the evenings. Three years of sea life, at his age, had made the day sufficient for him; he had no desire to tack onto it a few hours from the night; so he was generally at his own fireside after supper. And it seemed to Thyra as if she could not put a stop to her present life too soon. The

fever of change was in her heart; she wanted to go away at once.

She went downstairs, but the parlor was empty. The kitchen had been "redded up" and the girls were off to some fisher ploy in the town. Maran was not to be seen; neither was her father; but as she stood at the open door they came into her vision together. They were walking slowly together in the yard, and Paul's arm was around Maran; and as Thyra stood gazing at them, Maran lifted her rosy-smiling face to Paul, and he stooped and kissed her. There could be no mistaking their attitude; it was that of acknowledged lovers.

It did not take Thyra many minutes to realize this fact; then she fled to her room like one pursued, and, slipping in the bolt, threw herself in a passion of grief and anger on her bed. What a traitor Maran had been! And her father was as bad! Oh, how wretched she was! She, who had been everything in that house, had become nothing. She told herself she would better go away, go anywhere, where she could not be hourly made to see and feel her fall. It was synonymous of her lost influence that she was quite forgotten that night. No one asked after her; no one bid her a good-night. The house was all still and asleep before she could believe this, but a tip-toe visit to the head of the stairs convinced her she might as well go to sleep also. It was, after all, a fortunate neglect. In the morning her good Norse sense

had put her angry emotions in their proper place. She told herself, as she dressed, that she could do no good to Thyra by complaining. It would be far wiser for her to accept with apparent pleasure the inevitable. And she was now just enough to acknowledge it was her own doing. She had shirked her duty as the mistress of her father's house; she had invited Maran to take her place, yes, insisted on her doing so. She had praised her to Paul without stint; pointed out her many excellencies; and left them continually in each other's society; and then memory—keeping her sharpest shaft until the last—bade her remember, that it was she, herself, at that fateful birthday party, who had joined their names together. She could hear, as she recalled the fact, her own sharp clear voice, touched with anger, saying, “*Paul Varrick and Maran Flett!*” Furthermore, was she not at that very time desiring to leave her father, and her home, and look for circumstances which would make her happier? Could she complain if the same sense of her dissatisfaction had caused her father to consider a little of his own future and his own happiness?

“I deserve just what I have got,” she said, throwing down her dressing comb with the words, in order to give them emphasis, “but I need not make bad worse. I will not let Maran tempt me to that folly, whatever comes or goes.”

So she went down with smiles, ignored the neglect

of the previous night, and as soon as it was a good moment, said, "Father, if thou art willing, I should like to go South again. I have so much yet to learn—Lady Fraser will find me a home with some of her friends—and what do you think, Maran?"

Maran looked at Paul, and Paul looked into his teacup. Finally he answered, "Thou art of age, now, Thyra. I have no right to hinder thee, by word or deed, in any good thing thou wantest to do. I think also the plan in thy mind is not bad."

"Say it is good for me, Maran," and she leaned to the happy-looking woman and pulled her cap-strings pleasantly.

"Well, then, I think it might be good for you; I do. You never wasted your time. You did very well South before; I don't wonder you want to try it again. If I was your father, I would put nothing in your way——"

"Let the matter drop now, Thyra. We will all of us think about it," said Paul, and he pushed his plate aside, and rose hurriedly from the table. It was hardly an hour afterward that he called her in an excited manner, "Thyra, Thyra, come here."

She answered the call at once, and saw him standing at the foot of the stairs holding out a letter. "It will be from Lord and Lady Fraser," he said, "look at the sploring red seal and the crest on it."

It was from Lady Fraser, and its contents were

an admirable fulfillment of Thyra's ardent desire. And perhaps it was the very existence of this ardent desire which brought this response to it; for, undoubtedly, there are many cases in which desire creates its own verifications; so that our future may be often conditioned by our present faith in it. At any rate, Thyra held in her hand the desire of her heart. Lady Fraser wrote from Barlock, their castle near Aberdeen. She said her lord had never been well since Donald's death, and they had resolved to go for two or three years to France, Italy, Greece, and perhaps as far as Palestine. She wanted a companion, someone to talk English with, someone to help her abuse foreigners in general; and would Thyra accept the position? They would give her one hundred pounds a year, and love and thanks beyond money and price.

Would Thyra go? She was enchanted at the prospect. She began to prepare herself at once. She asked no questions about her father's or Maran's future. She knew they could take care of their own affairs, and on the last day of August again set sail for Aberdeen in the *Maid of Orkney*. It pained her to see how little she would be missed; but she accepted the effusive kindness of these last days as some atonement—perhaps the only one possible. And was she not herself glad to escape from circumstances gradually environing her like a net. Yes, she was. Above all things, she desired to be just; so she took grate-

fully the affection offered, and did not worry herself with inquiries as to whether she got all she ought to have.

Nor did it trouble her much when, a month afterward, she received a letter from her father and Maran saying they were married. They signed themselves her "loving father and mother," and she accepted the gift of love at its face value. She was watching the packing of trunks when the news came, but she took time to write a long, loving letter congratulating her father on his good wife, and Maran on her good husband. She told them all the news, personal, social, and political, and so filled the letter with the aura of her own hope and gladness, that Paul and Maran were charmed. They could do nothing but talk of their wonderful daughter, and Paul took the letter to the Dominie to read.

"Thou seest," he said, "the little maid promises to write to us from every city, and tell us all she hears and sees."

"She is a good woman, a wise woman, too," answered the Dominie; "and, Paul, there is only one man worthy of her."

"Robert?"

"Just Robert. Professor Thorson."

"It will never be now."

"It will be, if it is to be. Half a year ago Maran Flett was for running away from thee. Now she is thy wife."

“She is, thank God! A good wife, the best of wives!”

“To be sure. ‘The best of wives’ is the commonest kind; every man has one.”

Before the winter came Lord Fraser’s party were on the way to Paris, but they did not remain long there. Everything in those last days of French monarchy appalled the Scotch nobleman; and they quickly went eastward, wandering leisurely through the storied cities of the Mediterranean, until they finally fixed their home in an old palace on the outskirts of Rome.

Then a latent taste for numismatics in Lord Fraser asserted itself, and he found a constant interest in searching for old coins, and, secondarily, for engraved seals. A prominent member of the English colony of visitors in Rome was his friend and companion; and there were many delightful English people sunning life away in the famous old city. For all its mediæval picturesqueness, and all its theological splendor, was then in full sway; and in the wide world there could not have been found such a marvelous contrast to the gray, homely cities of Scotland as this city on its seven hills.

Pleasantly and profitably three years passed, and Thyra had become almost a daughter to her friends; and in the society they frequented she was much admired. Many lovers sought her favor, but none obtained it; and Lord Fraser, talking with his wife

one night over what he called "Thyra's caprices," wondered why this should be. "No nicer fellow in all England than that Yorkshire squire," he said; "why did she not take him, Cecilia?"

"I do not pretend to know, Fraser. I wonder if she yet cares for MacDonald?"

"I don't believe she ever did care for him. Took his marriage too sensibly. What do you say to the other man—the one she refused to marry?"

"I say she refused to marry him—ran away from him—it can't be he."

"Oh, I don't know that! When MacDonald was lost, her heart would go back to her first love—doubtless, its true love. Then also, women have a perverse liking for what they have lost, or flung away. Depend upon it, Cecilia, the other man is the person who stands in the way of Thyra's marrying. I wish we knew who and what he is!"

"I will soon find that out; and as you have begun polishing your coins, I will go about the business now."

So saying, she went in search of Thyra, whom she found in the garden, sitting perfectly idle, and at rest, enjoying the sunset and the warm scented air. She made room for Lady Fraser beside her, and for some minutes they spoke of the delicious climate and its seductive incentive to doing nothing. Then Lady Fraser said, "Why would you not marry Squire Yeadon, Thyra? He seemed to be all that any woman

could desire. Is he not as handsome as the MacDonald was? ”

“ Much handsomer. It is not that. I do not love him.”

“ You do not care now for the MacDonald? ”

“ No, no, no! He has passed out of my memory.”

“ Who is it, then, that you do care for? Tell me, Thyra.”

Then Thyra opened her heart to her friend, and discovered all its secret sorrow and longing. “ It is the man I have always loved from my childhood,” she said; “ the man that I have treated so badly that I am beyond his forgiveness.” Then she confessed all her folly, and all her cruelty to her true lover. “ I think I was under a spell,” she continued, “ for my love for MacDonald was never a good or a happy love. It led me into sin and disobedience, lying and cruelty, from the first.”

“ Yet you did fret a great deal about MacDonald.”

“ I think now I was fretting more for myself—for my own loss, and humiliation, and evil doing, than for Hector MacDonald. I never grudged Sara her lover, or her husband; and if I wept when he was under sentence of death, it was the horror of the death and—myself again. I had ceased to care for him—that way. I was caring then for Robert, fretting about Robert——”

“ Robert? Who is Robert? An Orkney man? ”

“ Yes—but he does not live in Orkney now.”

"Where does he live?"

"In Aberdeen."

"What is his full name—Christian, and surname, let me hear it all?"

"Robert Thorson."

"Professor Robert Thorson?"

"Yes."

"Good gracious, Thyra! He was in Rome a week ago. Lord Fraser was to have met him at a friend's house; but he had such a bad attack of gout that day, he could not keep his engagement. And we did not know, or we would have asked him here. You see, child, what folly it is to be so reticent."

"In Rome a week ago! Oh, dear! I have missed him again! We shall never meet any more! When I was in Orkney, three years ago, he came there on a short visit, and I hoped he would call and see me, and forgive me; and he was kept away by the most innocent and trifling misunderstanding. I have fretted about it ever since. I think I shall never see him again."

"Yes, you will. I have long wished to go home. Now I am going. We shall be in Aberdeen soon after the Professor, and then it will be your own fault if you never see him again."

Then she hurried away to tell her lord who "the other man" was; and Lord Fraser was delighted. "I always thought that girl had uncommon sense," he said; "Thorson must be a grand fellow. He knows

more about coins, many say, than any Roman expert. He is very learned; learned, mind you, in six or seven languages. What do you think of that? And as handsome as a Greek god—well, as a Norse god, anyway—Baldur, rather than Apollo. I say, Cecilia, let us go home, and get them married. They ought to be married. It is a kind of religion to marry people so fitted for each other. And I am tired to death of Italy. I want to see the gorse and the heather—miles and miles of them—Cecilia, if we hurried a little we could be in Scotland for the grouse and blackcock.”

The whole family were quickly touched with the same “home” fever; and in the early part of August they had reached fair Lochbar. The exhilarating air filled with the odors of sea and mountains—the gray ocean—the dappled skies—the blessed north winds with the Arctic ozone in them—the fragrance of the thyme and lavender—the glory of the August garden, with its homely goodness of raspberries and gooseberries—all these things were never so beautiful and bountiful before. Lord Fraser now wondered “why people were such fools as to seek in foreign lands what they had so much better at home”; and Lady Fraser thought “they never would have been such fools, but for the temptation of coins, and seals, and such dead nonsense”; and for a whole week this charming freshness of home beauties and luxuries gave them continued enthusiasms, and imparted to life a full sense of their forgotten youths.

One day when Lord Fraser was in Aberdeen he went into a bookseller's shop, and Professor Thorson was there. He spoke to him at once, regretted his inability to meet him in Rome, and promptly asked him to dine that night at Lochbar. The invitation was as promptly accepted, and then, as speedily as possible, Lady Fraser was informed of their coming guest.

"So far, well, Fraser," she said, "but see you do not put your foot in the matter. Do not appear until the first dinner bell rings. I want this trouble at an end before we sit down to eat. It will be so uncomfortable to have a pair of estranged lovers at the table. The Professor will not be able to talk, and I doubt if Thyra will know what she is saying; and neither of them will eat a mouthful—and we shall then very likely say something unfortunate."

Then Lady Fraser sat down with a book until Thyra entered the room. "Thyra," she said, "I wish you would dress for dinner a little earlier than usual. Lord Fraser and I may be rather late; so then if the architect comes about the greenhouse addition you can talk to him as well as anyone. You know our plans. What are you going to wear to-night?"

"I don't know—my little gray frock will do."

"Yes; but I like you so much better in the pale green—however, please yourself."

"No; I prefer to please you;" so in an hour she

appeared in a frock of palest green silk. There was a good deal of white lace about the arms and bodice, and among its folds a single red rose. Lady Fraser laid her hand over it. "White heather would be so much better," she said, "white and green; then you would look like a sea princess, as dear wee Donald used to call you."

"Golden tangle and purple and scarlet algæ would be better."

"Green water and white sea foam—white heather is best; and you will find some blooming in pots at the extreme end of the greenhouse. Put a little bunch here—and here—and here; and bring me some for the table. You need not hurry, dear; I am going to dress myself now."

Yet she walked with Thyra to the greenhouse door, and there was a sense of hurry in her own movements; for she saw Professor Thorson coming, and she feared for the success of her plot. But when things are to happen, all goes well, and this thing went to perfection. Thyra was safe in the greenhouse when the Professor entered the parlor.

"Ah, Professor!" she said, "I must introduce myself to you, and you to myself. Lord Fraser will be here in a short time. I am so glad you have come, for there is a flower in the greenhouse you must see, or you will never forgive yourself."

She had led him to the door as she was speaking, and opening it, she added, "walk to the very end, and

you will see it standing by a pot of white heather. I will join you in a short time."

Robert was smiling and expectant. He went straight down the aisle of scent and beauty until he came to a turn which revealed another aisle running northward. Then he understood. Then he saw Thyra with a bunch of white heather in her hand, and as he looked, he saw her bend her lovely head, and pin it to her bosom. The next moment Thyra saw Robert. With eager face and wide-open eyes she watched him hurrying toward her; and his loving exclamation, "Thyra! Thyra! My dear, dear Thyra!" filled her heart with joy beyond words.

The next moment he had folded her in his arms. He felt that she made no resistance. He felt that he was welcome—looked for—loved. Yes; there was no need of words in this reunion, words would come after, but hearts have a subtler and more convincing eloquence. Their eyes, the clasp of their hands, the touch of their lips, had said more than speech could ever say. There was a wonderful half-hour in the greenhouse, and then they went into the parlor; and were met by Lord and Lady Fraser with smiles of understanding. Explanations were very easy, and after dinner Lord Fraser magnanimously put his coins aside, and advised the lovers to take a walk in the garden, and "get all their explanations over."

And in that sweet solitude Robert craved and asked that audible surrender which love on one of its sides

always desires, and will not be satisfied without. He asked with almost peremptory eagerness, "Wilt thou now say to me, 'Robert, I love thee?'" and she answered, "I have always loved thee, Robert. When I was a child I loved thee—there was a time—I think I had lost my senses—thou hast forgiven me?"

"I have forgotten all about that time. It was appointed—it was for our good—the past has had its due; it is now, and the future."

"Now, I love thee more than myself. I shall love thee as long as I live."

"Thou must promise to love me for all eternity."

"I will do that, if——"

"There is no 'if.' Love fears not the grave. Love is of the soul, and shares its immortality."

"I am thine forever, Robert."

"When wilt thou marry me?"

"Whenever it is thy wish."

"Where wilt thou marry me?"

"I wish to marry thee in Kirkwall. It was there I shamed thee, and wronged thee. It is there I will take wifehood from thy hands. I will take it with all the joy and pride that may be. I am going to see my father and Maran this month——"

"And I will go with thee, and the Dominie shall join our hands, and give us the bridal blessing. Tomorrow thou must come and see thy house. It is a fair, white house, in a large garden. It is covered with ivy,

and the birds build everywhere in it; and the rooms are large and well furnished, and whatever is lacking thou shalt have it. Always I have known, that sooner or later thou wouldst come to me. I have kept thy home ready and waiting for thee."

Then Thyra told him all about Donald, and the narrative solemnized and blessed their hearts, and Robert said, "There is a large, bright room upstairs, and we will call it 'Donald's room,' and there we will hang his pictures, and his likeness, and bestow all his books and treasures. And the best of our furniture shall go into it, and it shall be the 'Prophet's Room' in our house; and whenever any good man comes to the University to preach, he shall stay in it, and so every visitor will have grace there, and it will be like a little sanctuary for us when our hearts are troubled or we are weary and heavy-laden."

All these plans were fully carried out. The Domine got his letter asking him to "cry" the banns of marriage between Robert Thorson and Thyra Varrick on a Sunday morning as he was going to church; for it had been marked "*Haste! Haste!*" and so delivered to him, when otherwise it would have remained in the mail until Monday morning. And Paul, who went more fequently to church since his marriage, was there that morning, and was so startled by the news that he rose to his feet; and Maran could hardly refrain an exclamation; and there was an audible stir all through the congregation. But in due time the



GOOD WILL, AND BLESSINGS WERE SHOWERED ON THEM.

wedding followed the "crying," and the event made a great stir in old Kirkwall.

Thyra had never looked more exquisitely lovely than on her wedding-day. She was dressed in a gown of the finest and whitest Dacca muslin, dotted all over with silver stars. It was one of the lovely things her father had brought her from India; and he was proud to see her wearing it. Everything about her was beautiful, and she walked to the kirk leaning on the arm of her father; Maran proudly following on the arm of Professor Thorson. The streets were lined with spectators and friends. Good will and blessings were showered on them as they passed; and Robert Thorson had that day a full atoning cup for all the bitterness of the one he had been forced to drink six years ago. For the love we have deserved will stand faithfully by us; we may rely on reaching it, and the more space in our life and feeling it incloses, the more space there will be for our future happiness. It is through loving we learn to love.

CHAPTER XV

Two-and-Twenty Years, and More

IN a book, marriage may be the end of a story ; in reality, it is the beginning. In Robert's and Thyra's experiences, all that had gone before their marriage was but preparatory. Their love and hatred, their disappointments and sufferings, rough-hewn out of their apparently simple and happy lives, had been shaped to a beautiful order by that gracious Providence which turns our mistakes and misfortunes into blessings. All they were that day had sprung out of conditions man never would have selected as the means of educating and uplifting. They were quite conscious of this fact, and as they sat hand in hand, full of joy and hope, they recalled together the wonderful events which had led them to their present happiness and prosperity, gratefully acknowledging that every one of them had had its lesson, and its compensation.

So, equally yoked, they took up together the duties and pleasures of life in the fair city of Aberdeen. The large white house, covered with ivy, and shut up in its sweet garden, became a very happy home, and, as the years went on, had to be enlarged for the beau-

tiful boys and girls that grew within its pleasant rooms to manhood and womanhood. There were three boys—Paul, and Donald, and Robert; and three girls—Cecilia, and Maran, and Thyra. And every year the whole family went for six weeks to Kirkwall, and for these six weeks Paul and Maran were the happiest people in the world. Then the gray house by the gray sea became a house of song and laughter, of inexpressibly happy tumult, and of delightful irregularity.

And as the boys grew in years the *Meum and Tuum* was refit, and Paul himself taught them how to manage her. They became then for a few weeks sailors and fishers, and were as proud of their “oils”—perhaps more so—as they were of their academic gowns. As for the Thorson girls, they were, in Maran’s eyes, the most lovely and wonderful little women in the world; especially the smart, sonsy lassie, with golden hair, that bore her own name. To her Maran would have given the world if she could have done so.

These annual visits of six or eight weeks made the whole fifty-two wonderful to Paul and Maran. The incidents crowded into them served for conversation from one blissful period to another—the things “the children” had done and said—what they were going to do—what they were likely to say—their lovely gowns—their great abilities and their fine prospects. And perhaps most treasured of all the delights be-

longing to these summer holidays were the splendid sermons Robert preached. All Kirkwall came to hear them; all Kirkwall saw Paul listening with devout attention to his great son-in-law; and Maran was happy to know that all Kirkwall saw her go to her home leaning upon the arm of the preacher. On these Sabbaths Maran was so exalted that she would hardly have called King George "cousin."

Thus year went on after year; and it was only on festival days or days of memorial that Robert and Thyra counted their number, for happiness is no reckoner of hours, and young Paul Thorson was off to India, for the sea had called him from his very cradle. Indeed, according to a Fife saying, he had "been born with the sea in his mouth"—the salt drop in his blood had flavored his mother's milk. And young Donald had taken his first degree, and was going to be a minister; while Robert, still in his boy's jacket, was talking of battles and soldiers and predicting for himself a career like Alexander's.

As for the girls, they had no "careers," and they did not dream of them. They were growing up like flowers in a well-watered garden! good girls, sweet, modest, and clever, with their hands in all womanly ways. Their destiny was in the hands of God, and they did not seek to take it into their own hands, or to go out to a warfare for which they had no weapons.

This was a happy, purposeful life that Robert and Thyra led among their children; a life full of present

duties and pleasures, and reasonably looking forward to declining years

“serene and bright,
And lovely as an Orkney night.”

And the story of their love may well be left at this point to the reader's own imagination. Yet on the twenty-second anniversary of their wedding-day two events occurred, almost simultaneously, which are worth recounting, as they deal with the two men who directly changed the whole current of Robert Thorson's and Thyra Varrick's lives. The festival fell upon a Sabbath; and it was a day of smur and rain and of singular darkness for the end of August. But Robert was in a happy mood; he reminded Thyra of the date and was sorry to hear her say she had “a bad headache and a singular depression of spirits.” He answered, “It is the weather, dearest; a storm from the northward is coming, but it will soon blow over and take thy headache with it.”

Thyra, however, did not go to church with her family, and Robert had a moment's regret that it should be so. It broke a custom of more than twenty years. Yet never had his congregation heard him preach with such power. It was of the love of God he spoke, and his words burned and the place felt as if it was on fire—the Lord, merciful and gracious; the Lord, slow to anger; the Lord, who did not keep His anger forever; the Lord, who removed our sins from us as far as the east is from the west; the Lord,

who pitieth those that fear Him, even as a father pitieth his children. "*And why?*" he asked, while his voice grew tender as a woman's and rang out clear as a silver trumpet—"Why? Because He knoweth our frame, He remembers—*He remembers* that we are dust—*remembers* that we hold this treasure of Eternal Life in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust."

When the sermon was over he went down from the pulpit and stood at the communion table, and, as he waited there, he saw an officer in the uniform of an English general come towards him. After a moment's pause Robert walked to the railing of the communion place and stood there.

"Doctor Thorson," said the soldier, "I have watched and waited many years for this opportunity. Twice over, I owe my life to you and yours—I am Hector MacDonald. I wronged you in many ways. I am truly sorry. I crave your pardon, sir," and he held out his hand. And Robert clasped it as he answered:

"General, I forgave you when you slept by the cairn of Maeshowe. The favor my wife asked for you I would have asked also, if the opportunity had been given me;" and the grave, sweet smile which accompanied these words testified to the warmth and sincerity. The two men looked kindly at each other for a moment, their hands unclasped, and they parted forever in this world.

Thyra listened to this incident with a rather dissenting face. "I am glad I was not there," she answered. "I do not think I could have taken his hand. I wonder how thou couldst do it, Robert?"

"My dear one, we stood there in the holy place of the communion. It was over its railing we clasped hands. I thought at the moment Christ was between us. I have no anger against the man; why should I pretend it?"

"Yet he kept thee and me apart for six years."

"Six years of strange blessings, which made our future what it is. If I had remained a fisher, and thou——"

"Forgive me, Robert. I am ill at ease to-day. I know not what for."

"Thou wilt be better to-morrow. For the rest, I am glad I saw my enemy again. He is now my friend. We have washed away all the memories of sin and sorrow between us."

And at that very hour Paul Varrick was undergoing the far mightier lustration which death by water brings to those worthy of it. The storm only brooding at Aberdeen was lashing the Orkney seas into fury; and Paul, that day, would not accompany Maran to church. "I cannot go with thee, Maran," he said; "the *Shetland Lass* is outside and like to founder. I know all the poor fellows on her, and if thou wilt go and pray for them, I will start for the quay and see if I can do anything to help them."

So Paul went his way, and the outlook was black and dangerous. He thought, for a moment, how he had stood with Robert, one week ago, on the same spot and seen the ocean look like a blue wilderness, and the masts of the ships like church spires. Now the surf was thundering and boiling in the fissures of the coast, the gale whistling loud, and the waves dark with fate. The men on the *Shetland Lass* were crying out for help; and their sinking boat smashing into the black hollows of the waters raving with a sinister malignity. Paul looked at the sea and the boat, then as he tightened the strings of his sou'wester, he went to the *Meum and Tuum* and began to loose her fastenings. She looked half alive, and ready for the struggle; and Paul called out, "Gabriel, Sam, Hakon, *are you ready?*" There was half a moment's hesitation, and he added passionately, "*For Christ's sake, men!*" and at these words they leaped on board as one man; strong-armed, lion-faced, with set teeth and steady eyes, they were ready.

Paul took charge of the *Meum and Tuum*. He knew all her moods and tempers, when to coax and when to urge her, and could drive her along by tackings that no one else understood. They were only just in time; but they were in time; and they saved the five men; not one of them was lost; so with thankful hearts they turned to the land. Paul had the helm and was managing the boat beautifully; encouraging and humoring her till he could catch the nick

of time for helm up, then trusting to send her in like a thunderbolt. But in his careful watch of sea and wind he forgot himself; and a great wave, with a race and a roar, went over the boat, and carried Paul with it.

For a moment he was not missed, but any moment would have been too late. He had gone swiftly down to the grave by the road of the sea, carrying with him as a guerdon and a ransom the lives of the five men he had saved. For blessed is that man, who, with a full consciousness that the sacrifice may be accepted, can yet offer his life a salvation for others.

Also, it was the death Paul had always desired; and Robert comforted Thyra with this remembrance: "We must rejoice with thy dear father," he said, as he took a book from its place, and opened it where there was a paper mark: "three times he made me read him this happy prophecy of Teiresias in Hades, and wished that it might be his lot: '*Thine own death shall come upon thee from the sea—a gentle death, which shall end thy smooth old age, and the folks shall dwell happily around thee.*' Thy father wished the sea to find him one of her clean, cool graves, and he has his desire.

" ' A peace he has, that none may gain who live;
And rest about him, that no love could give;
And over him—while life and death shall be,
The light, and sound, and darkness of the sea.' "





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